

4.

MESSAGE 1

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PEOPLE CONCERNING
REDEDICATION-OFFERINGS, HOMAGE-OFFERINGS,
AND SLAUGHTER-OFFERINGS**

Leviticus 1:1-3:17

Introduction

The book of Leviticus opens with the first MESSAGE given to Moses from The Tabernacle. Previously Jehovah had spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:3,16-24; 20:1,18-22; 24:1-2,12-18; 25:1,40; 26:30; 27:8; 30:11,17,22,34; 31:1,12,18; 32:1,7,9; 34:4-5,10,27; 40:1,16,19,21,23,25,27,29,32). Also, while Moses was struggling with the question of forgiveness for Israel after their sin with the Golden Calf, Jehovah had spoken to him from a tent that had been hastily set up for worship in anticipation of the construction of The Tabernacle (Ex. 33:1,5,7-11,14,17; 34:1). But as Leviticus opens, the construction of The Tabernacle has been completed (Ex. 40:17-33). Part of the purpose of The Tabernacle was to provide a place from which Jehovah could speak to Moses (Ex. 25:25; 29:42); so after its construction Jehovah spoke to Moses from out of The Tabernacle. Leviticus begins with the first of those MESSAGES from The Tabernacle.

The first MESSAGE Jehovah spoke from The Tabernacle was a long one. After an introductory word about offerings in general, the MESSAGE deals with three kinds of offerings that Israelites were to offer on the altar in front of The Tabernacle. In KJV, those three offerings are called “burnt offerings,” “meat offerings,” and “peace offerings.” This volume will suggest that a better translation for their names is “rededication-offerings” (see comments on Lev. 1:3 below under the heading If his offering [is] a rededication-offering), “homage-offerings,” (see comments on Lev. 2:1 below under the heading offers an offering of homage to Jehovah), and “slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings” (see comments on Lev. 3:1 below under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings).

The Israelites were not being introduced to these offerings for the first time. The book of Genesis attests that each of these offerings, or offerings by the same names, had long been known to Jehovah worshipers. Also, other Semitic peoples of that time observed similar offerings that they called by almost identical names. Jehovah’s purpose in this MESSAGE was to give Israel’s offerings a form that would distinguish them both from similar offerings of other nations and also from the offerings previously offered by Jehovah worshipers. The form of the offerings that Jehovah outlined in Leviticus taught spiritual lessons related to the true God. They were in sharp contrast to forms of the pagan offerings that used the same names, because their ideas about God were sharply different (see INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS, page 4, where some striking differences between the two are listed. See also comments on Leviticus 1:2 under the heading from the herd, or the flock and in Footnote 8 related to Leviticus 2:1 under the heading offers an offering of homage to Jehovah). The form of these offerings that Jehovah outlined in this MESSAGE also differed from the form of offerings used by Jehovah’s people prior to that time. Two differences were especially significant: (1) The Leviticus offerings were to be presented only at The Tabernacle (Lev. 1:3,11,15; 2:2,8; 3:2,8,12), instead of at private altars built by the worshipers, as had been the practice previously (Gen. 8:20; 12:7,8; 13:4,18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1,3,7; Ex. 17:15). (2) Supervision of the offerings was to be by the priests (Lev. 1:5,7,8,9,11,12,13,15,17; 2:2,3,8,9,10; 3:2,5,8,11,13,16), rather than by the patriarch of the family (Noah, Gen. 8:20; Abraham, Gen. 12:7,8; 13:4,18; 22:9; Issac, Gen. 26:25; Jacob, Gen. 33:20; 35:1,3,7; Moses, Ex. 17:15; 24:5-6; Job, Job 1:5). Both of these new provisions strongly tended toward preserving the purity of the offerings as God revealed them and hindered their being corrupted by pagan or misguided ideas.

It is not the purpose of this writing to explore in detail how the forms of the offerings described in Leviticus differ from the forms of offerings used by pagan nations or even how the forms of the Leviticus offerings differed from the forms used by Jehovah worshipers prior to Sinai. The purpose of this writing is to study the offerings as Jehovah revealed them to Israel, with the goal of learning the spiritual truths Jehovah communicated through them. Important spiritual truths are abundant in this first MESSAGE that Jehovah gave to Moses at the newly dedicated Tabernacle. This first MESSAGE includes regulations for three types of offerings to be offered on The Tabernacle altar. Briefly, the general significance of each of those offerings is:

Rededication-offering	Total dedication to God
Homage-offering	Stewardship
Slaughter-offering	Fellowship.

Below is an outline of this first MESSAGE. On the right margin of the outline, the page numbers are listed where comments are made and interpretations given of each section of the outline.

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Critical Note

Older critical writers maintained that the offerings mentioned in this MESSAGE were of late origin. More recent archaeological discoveries, however, have shown that very similar offerings existed among other peoples in times at least as early as Moses. Of particular significance in this regard are discoveries made near the modern town of Ras Shamra in northern Syria, where the ancient city of Ugarit was excavated. There a whole library was excavated that has been dated around 1400 B. C., or approximately the time of Moses. Descriptions of an elaborate religious system were found, containing many elements similar to the Leviticus ceremonies, including offerings with very similar names to those described in Leviticus. As a result, more recent critics have taken the position that the Leviticus ceremonies existed in some form in early Israelite times, that an oral tradition concerning them was handed down through the years, and that they were finally put in written form in exilic or post-exilic times. However, the Ugarit discoveries are equally strong evidence for an early written form of the Israelite offerings as they are for their early existence. The Ugarit discoveries were written records of religious ceremonies. If Israelite ceremonies existed as early as the Ugarit ceremonies, they could have been written down in those early times, just as similar pagan ceremonies were written down in Ugarit.

Another piece of information that supports the early date for the writing of Leviticus is the use of the Hebrew word *lehem*, which is translated "food" in Leviticus 3:11, 16. In those verses, the word is obviously used to mean "food." The word was used with that meaning in the early days of Israel's history. Later it came to be restricted to mean only "bread." The use of the word with the meaning "food" in Leviticus 3 shows that these materials were written early, not in the latter years of the nation as the critical view claims (see comments on Leviticus 3:11 below.)

Interpretation

CHAPTER 1

Introductory note (1:1)

Verse 1. **And Jehovah called to Moses, and spoke to him out of The Tent of Meeting, saying,**

The first verse of this chapter is an introductory note, giving the setting of the MESSAGE that follows. It is not part of the MESSAGE that was spoken by Jehovah. It was written by the writer of the book to introduce the MESSAGE.

And. This word at the beginning of the book shows that it is a conscious continuation of what has preceded. The imperfect state of the verb, which is best translated "proceeded to call unto Moses and to speak to him," indicates the same idea. Leviticus is a continuation of the events described in Exodus.

Jehovah. This verse uses the Hebrew name for the true God. Translation of the name into English is difficult, because no one today knows exactly how it was pronounced. The ancient Israelites refused to speak the name for fear of

blaspheming it (see comments on Lev. 24:11 in MESSAGE 35). So when they read from the text

and came to God's name, they substituted the title "the Lord." As a result, different translations use different methods of translating the name into English.¹ Most often, they follow the Jewish practice of substituting the title "the LORD." However, the Jews never substituted the title for the name in the text. It would seem that we should not use a substitute either. Since "Jehovah" is still the best known spelling and pronunciation for the name in English, this writing will use "Jehovah" to represent God's name throughout these comments.

called to Moses, and spoke to him. The usual manner in which a new MESSAGE from Jehovah is introduced in this book is, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,...." Probably Moses added the word "called" in this first verse of the book to

¹ KJV, RSV, SGV, NEB, NASB, DRV, NAB, LB, and HCSB render the name as "LORD," spelled all in capitals. ABV renders the name as "Lord," with only the first letter capitalized. JB renders it as "Yahweh," which is a scholarly guess as to the original pronunciation. MV renders it as "the Eternal," which is an attempt at translating the meaning of the name, though it probably misses the meaning intended by the Israelites. The name was formed from the root of the verb "to be." To the ancient Israelites, it probably signified that Jehovah was present and active rather than that He was eternal. ASV and NWT render the name as "Jehovah," which is the traditional way of pronouncing the name in English.

emphasize that the MESSAGE was spoken to him audibly.

out of The Tent of Meeting. “The Tent of Meeting” is one of nineteen terms used in the Pentateuch to refer to The Tabernacle complex or to parts of it. Twelve of those terms are used in Leviticus. In addition to the one found in this verse, they are each explained in comments on the verses where they occur. Those names and the first location where each is found in Leviticus are: “the holiness,” or “The Holy [Place], Lev. 4:6; “The Holy Place,” Lev. 6:9; “The Tabernacle,” Lev. 8:10; “the place of holiness,” Lev. 10:17; “The Holiness,” Lev. 12:4; “My Tabernacle,” Lev. 15:31; “the holiness of the holiness,” Lev. 16:33; “the Tabernacle of Jehovah,” Lev. 17:4; “My holiness,” Lev. 19:30; “the holiness of God,” Lev. 21:12. (For examples of terms for The Tabernacle that do not appear in Leviticus, see Exodus 25:8, “a holiness”; Exodus 26:9, “the tent,” Exodus 26:33, “the holiness of holinesses” or “The Most Holy Place”, Exodus 38:21, “the tabernacle of the witness”; Exodus 39:32, “The Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting”; and Numbers 9:15, “the holiness of Jehovah.” (See also comments on Lev. 21:23 in MESSAGE 26 and on Lev. 26:31 in MESSAGE 37.)

Concerning the name for The Tabernacle that is used in this verse, the word translated “Tent” means a tent used for any purpose. The name “Tabernacle” that is more commonly used to refer to the place of offering offerings to Jehovah also means “tent,” but it always refers to a tent used as a dwelling. The word translated “Meeting” comes from a root that means “to meet at an appointed place or time” or “to assemble.” Thus, it may mean “congregation.” The Tabernacle was a place where individuals more often met Jehovah than congregations, so perhaps “The Tent of Meeting” is the best translation of the term. On the other hand, perhaps the term meant that The Tabernacle belonged to the whole of Israel, not just to the priests or the Levites. In that case, “The Tabernacle of the Congregation” would be a better translation. The definite article is never used in the Hebrew text in connection with the full phrase “The Tent of Meeting”; however, the term was never used for any other tent except the place of worship. The

term was the official title of the tent portion of the place where offerings were offered to God on the altar. Thus, in English it should be spelled with capitals and used with the definite article. “The terms “The Tent of Meeting” or “The Tabernacle of Meeting” will be used throughout this commentary in the manner that they occur in the Leviticus text.

The name “The Tent of Meeting” first occurs in Exodus 27:21. It occurs 34 times in Exodus, 43 times in Leviticus, 57 times in Numbers, and twice in Deuteronomy. The Tabernacle deserved to have the word “Meeting” in its title for three reasons: (1) It was the place designated for God to meet Moses to give him special audible revelations (Ex. 25:22; 29:42) and also to meet others for the same purpose (Lev. 10:8; 11:1; 13:1; 14:33; 15:1; Num. 2:1; 4:1; 12:4; 14:26; 16:20; 18:1,8; 19:1; 20:12,23; 26:1). Because Jehovah used The Tabernacle for that purpose, some have suggested the translation “Tabernacle of Revelation,” but that translation fails to take into account other reasons for meetings at The Tabernacle. (2) It was the place designated for individual Israelites to meet God when presenting offerings to Him (Lev. 1:3,11,15; 2:2,8; 3:2,8,12). (3) It was the place designated for the whole nation of Israel to meet God on special occasions. Occasions when the whole nation was called to meet God there included: dedication celebrations (Ex. 29:43; Lev. 8:3-5; 9:5), holy convocations during feast days (Lev. 23; see especially comments on Lev. 23:2 in MESSAGE 30), and announcements of judgment (Num. 16:15-35). The meetings were not held in The Tent but in front of The Tent.²

We must not suppose that Israelites believed that The Tabernacle was the only place where they could meet God. Jehovah worshipers had always

² The names “The Tabernacle of Meeting” and “The Tent of Meeting” continued to be used until Solomon built the Temple to replace it. When Solomon dedicated the Temple, The Tabernacle of Meeting was taken to the Temple along with the Ark of the Covenant, which had been in a different location from the Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in The Most Holy Place in the Temple, and the Tabernacle of Meeting is never mentioned again in the Scripture (compare 2 Chronicles 1:2-13 and 1 Kings 8:3-5; see also 2 Chronicles 5:4-6).

understood that they could meet God anywhere at any time. God had met with Abraham at Ur. (Gen. 12:1-3), at the oaks of Mamre (Gen. 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 18:1-33), and on Mount Moriah (22:15-18); with Isaac at Gerar (Gen. 26:1-6); with Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:12-16) and at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-32); and with Moses on Mount Horeb (Ex. 3:1-4:17). More importantly, these very Israelites had had too many vital encounters with God in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and at Sinai to believe that contact with God could be limited to only one place. Instead, The Tabernacle was intended to be a place for special meetings with God, as worshipers today meet God in a special way in a house of worship. Nevertheless, they also could meet Him anywhere in a personal experience, as believers do today. The Tabernacle symbolized for Israelites their right to meet God anywhere, and the offerings presented at The Tabernacle symbolized for them the experiences that would come to them as they met God in their hearts anywhere they might be.³

(1) Livestock offerings in general
(1:2)

Verse 2. Speak to the sons of Israel, and say unto them, When a man among you offers an offering to Jehovah, you must offer your offering from the livestock, from the herd, or from the flock.

Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them. This MESSAGE was spoken to Moses, but it was not meant for him alone. He was to tell it to all the

³ KJV is not consistent in its translation of the term “Tent of Meeting.” It sometimes translates it as “tent of the congregation” and in others passages as “tabernacle of the congregation.” ASV, RSV, SGV, NASB, ABV, and NWT consistently translate it as “the tent of meeting.” NEB always translates it “the Tent of the Presence.” DRV translates it in six different ways: “the tabernacle,” “the tabernacle of the testimony,” “the testimony,” “the tabernacle of the covenant,” “the covenant,” and “the covenant of the testimony.” It is not only inconsistent, it is also inaccurate in each rendering. JB always renders it as “the Tent of Meeting,” while NAB always uses “the meeting tent.” LB customarily renders it as “the Tabernacle,” but it uses “the Tent for Meeting with God” in one instance. MV always renders it “the Trysting tent.” NIV always translates it as “Tent of Meeting,” and HCSB always translates it as “tent of meeting.”

sons of Israel. The word “sons” was not intended to mean males only, because later Scriptures showed that women as well as men could offer offerings at The Tabernacle (Lev. 12:6-8; 15:28-30). This MESSAGE related to forms of worship that all of the descendants of Israel were to understand and practice.

When. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word translated “when” is “that.” In an expression like the one in this verse, it means “when.” Some translations mistakenly translate it as “if.” God did not imply that presenting offerings was optional for the Israelites. He expected that they would offer fire-offerings to Him. This MESSAGE was to give them instructions about what they were to do when they brought their offerings.

a man. “Man” should be understood here in its generic sense, including men and women, because later references show that both could offer offerings at the altar (see comments on Lev. 2:1 below under the heading someone).

among you. This MESSAGE spells out distinctive worship principles that the Israelites were to practice in the future. Their offerings were to be distinctively different from similar offerings of other nations and even distinctively different from similar offerings made previously by the people of Jehovah before Sinai. So this MESSAGE was directed specifically toward the Israelites.

offers an offering. Both the verb and the noun in this phrase are drawn from the same root. The basic meaning of the root is “to draw near,” or in causative form “to bring near.” The noun was used to represent something brought near to another person as an expression of friendship or honor. The nearest English equivalent that maintains the similarity between the verb and the noun is “present a present.” “Offer an offering” is also a good translation.

The noun in this phrase was a general Hebrew word used to describe all the offerings to be offered at The Tabernacle. As the MESSAGES continued, Jehovah described five different kinds of offerings that were to be offered at the altar. Each had its own distinctive name, but this word applied

to all of the offerings. Since the word represented a present or a gift, it showed that the ceremonies Israel offered at the altar were to be willing gifts, not something done out of compulsion and not something that involved suffering. The basic idea of the offerings was not one of loss or denial, but rather one of presenting a gift of friendship out of love. “Sacrifice” is not a good word to use in translating this word into English, because “sacrifice” to the modern reader means loss or suffering. Translating the word as “victim,” as some translations do, is a serious violation of the meaning of the offerings, because it completely misses the willing spirit in which Israelites were to bring their offerings. “Offering” or “present” is the correct translation.

This Hebrew word for “offering” does not occur before this point in the Pentateuch. Although the verb had been used frequently prior to this point, it had never been used in the sense of bringing an offering to Jehovah. On the other hand, in Leviticus and Numbers, the whole phrase “offer an offering” occurs 15 times. The noun by itself occurs 45 times, and the verb by itself as a reference to presenting an offering to Jehovah occurs 79 times. Evidently, this noun was a new word that originated here, while the verb was given a new meaning at the same time. If so, the words were introduced here to provide a designation for all the offerings Jehovah was about to reveal. He introduced it to show that the spirit of the offerings was to be that of a loving gift.⁴

from the livestock. This word referred to domestic animals, as distinct from birds and wild animals. Its best English translation is “livestock.” Offerings were to be made only from domestic animals, because unless the offerer presented to Jehovah something that he owned or purchased it would not have been an expression of love.

Capturing a wild animal to present as an offering would have been offering something that meant very little or nothing to the worshiper and would have represented nothing concerning his love and devotion to God.

from the herd or from the flock. “The herd” referred to cows, male or female. “The flock” referred to sheep or goats. Only these among domestic animals were to be used as offerings. The reason was that only these animals were considered to be clean animals among the domestic animals of Israel. The regulations concerning clean and unclean animals were not given until later (Leviticus 11:2-8), but the concept of clean and unclean was already familiar to the Israelites (Gen. 7:2, 8; 8:20). The point was that offerings made to Jehovah were sacred and holy and were, therefore, to be selected only from among clean animals. This was in sharp contrast to practices of pagan nations, who honored all kinds of unclean and even repugnant animals as representations of their gods and who offered them as offerings to their gods. This emphasis was not lost on the Israelites who had just left Egypt, where wild and even repugnant animals were a regular and vital part of their worship. Thus, the distinctive holy and moral nature of the worship of Jehovah was introduced in these earliest words in Leviticus.

These words show that offerings to Jehovah had to be not only clean but domestic. This provision was another new provision for offerings in Israel. The Introduction to this MESSAGE cites references to show that God gave Moses two new instructions concerning the offerings to distinguish the Leviticus offerings from previous practices: (1) the use of only one place to offer offerings, and (2) supervision of the offerings by priests instead of family patriarchs. The instructions in this MESSAGE reveal one other difference. When Noah offered rededication-offerings after the flood, he offered offerings of every kind of clean animal and bird on the ark, both wild and domestic (Gen. 8:20). Perhaps he did so because all animals acted like domestic animals while they were on the ark, and therefore they were precious to Noah. Offerings had to be valuable to the offerer if they were to be meaningful. In Moses’ time, for the offerings to be valuable and

⁴ KJV translates this phrase in four ways in different places: “bring an offering,” “bring an oblation,” “offer an offering,” and “offer an oblation.” HCSB uses three translations: “bring an offering,” “present an offering,” and “offer an offering.” All other versions are equally or much more inconsistent in translating this phrase, which is unfortunate since words for the offerings were used with very distinct and specific meanings in these materials.

meaningful to the offerer, they needed to be not only clean but also domestic.

(2) Rededication-offerings (1:3-17)

(a) Of the herd (1:3-9)

Verse 3. If his offering [is] a rededication-offering of the herd, he must offer a pristine male. He must offer it at the entrance to The Tent of Meeting for its acceptance by Jehovah's face.

If his offering [is] a rededication-offering. The word translated "offering" in this verse is the general word for all kinds of offerings, already used in verse 2. The word translated "rededication-offering" is a specific word for one particular kind of offering. The Hebrew name so translated is based on a root that means "to ascend," or "to go up." "Going-up-offering" or "rising-up-offering" or "ascension-offering" would be literal translations of the name. Generally Bible students and translators have assumed that the ascending refers to the smoke that went up from the altar as the offering was burned or rather roasted. It is true that this offering "went up" in smoke, but "burning" was not the basic meaning of the name. All five of the offerings God authorized for Israel were offered on the altar and went up in smoke, but the name "rising-up-offering" applied only to this type of offering. So something more distinctive must have been involved in this offering than just its rising up in smoke. In addition, the names of all the other offerings describe their significance, that is, what they stood for in the offerer's life. We should expect the name of this offering to have a similar meaning. It should reveal the spiritual experience that the offering symbolized. The study of this offering that follows will show that it represented the full surrender to God of the life of the one who presented the offering. The "ascension" then meant that the offerer was offering up his or her heart and life in full surrender to God. This significance for the offering explains why it is mentioned first. The total surrender of self is the first and most important principle involved in living the covenant life. Thus, the basic and most important offering of Israel was this offering that symbolized a life fully surrendered to God.

"Rededication" is a term widely used today to mean the full surrender of a believer's life to God. That term probably more nearly represents the idea of this offering than any other name that is available to the English reader today. Therefore, this volume will use the name "rededication-offering" as the name for this offering. The name will be hyphenated to show that the name it translates is only one word in the original.

This type offering was known previously to Jehovah worshipers. Noah offered a rededication-offering after the flood (Gen. 8:20). Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac as a rededication-offering (Gen. 22:2,3,6,7,8,13). Moses mentioned rededication-offerings in asking Pharaoh to release the Israelites (Ex. 10:25). Jethro offered a rededication-offering when he met Moses and the Israelites right after the Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 18:12). Young men of Israel offered rededication-offerings at the foot of Sinai (Ex. 24:5), and the Israelites desecrated rededication-offerings by offering them to the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:6). Rededication-offerings were mentioned fifteen times in instructions given to Moses at Sinai prior to this revelation, in anticipation of the details given in this MESSAGE (Ex. 10:25; 18:12; 20:24; 24:5; 29:18,25,42; 30:28; 31:9; 35:16; 38:1; 40:6,10,29; 46:29). So rededication-offerings were not introduced for the first time in this MESSAGE. Rather in this MESSAGE Jehovah regulated them for use by God's covenant people in the future.

"Burnt offering" has been the most common English translation of the name of this offering. It is inadequate for four reasons: (1) the Hebrew name does not mean "fire" or "burning" but "ascension." (2) This title becomes confusing when compared with the term "fire-offering, which was another name for all the offerings (see comments on Lev. 1:9 below under the heading a fire-offering). (3) Some part or parts of all of Israel's offerings were burned or roasted on the altar, so the name "burnt offering" fails to bring out any distinctive meaning that applied to it. (4) The title of all the other offerings indicated the spiritual significance of the offerings, strongly indicating that the name of this offering did the same.

Some have sought to deal with these problems by suggesting that the name be translated as “whole burnt offering.” However, that translation does little to deal with the problems mentioned and adds a new misconception. The whole animal was not offered on the altar as this name would indicate. A greater portion of this offering was offered on the altar than of the other offerings, but the hide of the animal was not offered on the altar. It was reserved for the officiating priest (see comments on Lev. 7:8 in MESSAGE 7).⁵

of the herd. Rededication-offerings could have considerable variety with regard to the animal offered, as explained in the remainder of this chapter. Jehovah began by explaining the procedure to be followed when offering an animal of the cow family.

a pristine male. A male animal was specified because of its value. The Israelites placed special emphasis and honor on the male of every species. The birth of a son was the occasion for greater rejoicing than the birth of a daughter. The very word for “male” in Hebrew underscored this attitude. Its root meaning was “a remembrance, a memorial.” A male son was someone to remember, to talk about. He was a memorial to preserve the remembrance of his ancestors and to carry their line into the future. This value placed on the human male carried over into the animal realm, in much the same way that greater value is placed today on a male animal, because it can be used for breeding purposes. Since the animal in this offering represents the surrender of self, only a male animal

was valuable enough to represent the surrender of the person’s life.

For the same reason, an animal offered to Jehovah was to be the very best specimen possible. The word translated “pristine” is usually translated as “without blemish. That translation conveys the idea of the original. However, the meaning of the Hebrew word is positive rather than negative. It emphasized the good qualities possessed by the animal rather than the bad qualities that were to be lacking. Only SGV recognizes this significant fact, by translating the phrase “a perfect male.” The word is based on a root that means “to be complete” or “to be finished.” The meaning is that the animal was to be whole and healthy. It might be translated “ideal,” “model,” “superb,” “excellent,” or “fine.” Only an animal that was an example of best was worthy of presentation to God and worthy of representing the life of a person. The translation “pristine” has been chosen for use in this commentary because it is positive and shows that the animal was to be in tip-top condition.

at the entrance of. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word translated “entrance” is “opening.” The word can be used to mean “door”; however, The Tabernacle did not have a wooden or metal door. Its entrance was covered with a curtain (Ex. 26:36). In this verse, it should be translated “entrance,” as NEB, JB, CJB, GNB, MSG, and HCSB translate it. The altar where offerings were roasted stood in front of the entrance to The Tabernacle.

the Tent of Meeting. The offering had to be offered at The Tabernacle. Previously Jehovah worshipers had offered their offerings on private altars built by the worshipers. From this time onward, offerings were to be offered on the altar that was in front of The Tent of Meeting, except for offerings that could be offered on altars made of earth to honor places where God gave a person a special experience with Him (Ex. 20:24). The purpose was to protect the offerings from abuse and thus preserve the form and meanings Jehovah had poured into them.

for its acceptance by Jehovah’s face. KJV translates this phrase “of his own voluntary will . . . before the LORD.” The word that KJV translates as

⁵ KJV usually translates the name of this offering as “burnt offering” but sometimes renders it as “burnt sacrifice.” ASG, SGV always and MV usually translate it as “burnt-offering.” RSV, NASB, NWT always and LB, ABV usually render it as “burnt offering.” NEB usually renders it “whole offering,” while DRV, JB, NAB usually use “holocaust.” NIV usually translates it as “burnt offering,” but uses “offering” four times, “sacrifice” once, and “whole burnt offering” once. HCSB always translates the name as “burnt offering,” with two exceptions: 1 Kings 18:33, where it translates it as “offering to be burned” and Isaiah 61:8, where it follows a different manuscript and translates it as “injustice.” None of these translations help the reader grasp the significance of this offering.

“voluntary will” does not mean “free will” but “good will,” “favor,” or “acceptance.” Most English translations other than KJV recognize that meaning by translating the phrase as, “so that he may be accepted” or other similar words. However, CJB and MSG better capture the real significance of the phrase by translating it as “so that it may be accepted.” The point of offering a perfect animal was not so that the offerer would be accepted, but so that the offering would be accepted. The offerer had already been accepted, because he was in covenant relationship with God. Only those who were Israelites and who had entered into covenant with God were qualified to offer offerings at The Tabernacle. So an Israelite who approached the altar had already been accepted by God. He offered his offering, not to gain acceptance, but to express his appreciation for being accepted. He showed his appreciation by dedicating his whole life to God. This view is strongly supported by the fact that the same word is used again in the next verse. There it clearly refers to God’s accepting the offering and is translated in that manner even in KJV.

Verse 4. **And he shall press his hand on the head of the rededication-offering; and it shall be accepted for him to cover over him.**

And he shall press his hand on the head of the rededication offering. The meaning of the verb in this clause is “to lean” or “to rest weight upon.” The verb is in the perfect state, which indicates definite, deliberate action. Thus, the laying on of the hands was a forceful act by which the offerer rested his weight on the head of the animal. This action has been interpreted in two ways. It has been interpreted to mean that the offerer was transferring the weight of his sins onto the animal, so that the roasting of the animal on the altar removed his sins. This interpretation communicates the important truth that a substitutionary death is required to remove people’s sins, but that idea is not in keeping with the meaning of the rededication-offering. It is in keeping with the meaning of the sin-offering. The second interpretation is that this action showed that the animal symbolized the worshiper himself. The worshiper rested his weight on the head of the animal to indicate that the animal portrayed what was happening within him. He was offering His life to God to be used for Him, and the offering of the

animal on the altar symbolized that fact. This writer believes in the vicarious death of Jesus. I do not take this position to deny the importance of the substitutionary death of Jesus. I do it to insist that this offering illustrated a worshiper’s surrender of his complete self to God, a fundamentally important principle in Old and New Testament covenant living.

it shall be accepted for him. The preposition “for” in this clause does not mean “instead of” but “with regard to,” or “with respect to.” The meaning is that the animal would be accepted as a symbol of the offerer and of his inner spiritual surrender to God. The animal was accepted to represent the worshiper.

to cover over him. The Hebrew word translated “to cover” is one of the most important words in the book of Leviticus. Its correct interpretation is crucial to a proper understanding of all the ceremonies of Leviticus. The root of the word means “to cover.” It referred to the covering of a man to protect him from his sins, so that those sins no longer could prevent him from experiencing fellowship with God.

This word has a noun form, which has traditionally been translated “atonement,” and a verb form, which has traditionally been translated “to make atonement.” What could be more natural for a Christian than to immediately assume that this word describes the experience Christians know as salvation, the washing away of sin through the blood of Jesus? But, no matter how natural it seems, that conclusion is not supported by the use of the word in the Pentateuch. A study of the use of the word shows these facts: (1) Inanimate objects received covering or “atonement” as well as human persons. Some examples are: the altar of rededication-offerings (Ex. 29:36-37; Lev. 16:18) and the altar of incense (Ex. 30:10). Those objects were not capable of sinning and needed no shedding of blood to atone for their offenses. Therefore, when the word translated “atonement” is applied to them, it must have a meaning that is different from the substitution of Messiah’s life to pay for the penalty of sins and bring salvation (see comments under the heading shall offer the blood, and splash the blood in Lev. 1:5 above.). (2) Other objects

provided "atonement" besides the blood of the offerings, for example, the sanctuary shekel (Ex. 30:15-16), the offering of fine flour (Lev. 5:11-13), anointing with oil (Lev. 14:18,29), the goat for complete removal (Lev. 16:10), the tribe of Levi (Num. 8:19), the burning of incense (Num. 16:46-48), the slaying of two idolatrous Israelites (Num. 25:1-13), and the gift of gold and jewels (Num. 31:48-50). Those objects are totally inadequate to symbolize the shed blood of the promised Son. Therefore, when it is said that they provided covering or "atonement," the meaning must have been something other than a substitutionary death to pay for the penalty of sin. (3) The offerings did not put special emphasis on the blood as a means of covering or "atonement." The blood was only one element in the offerings among many that are said to provide covering or "atonement" (Lev. 1:4; 4:13-5:13; 5:14-6:7; 7:7; 8:34; 9:7; 10:17; 14:19-21; 15:15,30; 16:11; 19:21-22; 23:26-28; Num. 5:8; 6:11; 8:12; 15:22-26,27-28; 28:30 29:5, 11. Thus, the concept of covering or "atonement" in Leviticus had to be a broader concept than salvation through the shed blood of Messiah. (See comments on Lev. 17:10-16 in MESSAGE 21, which is the one passage that emphasizes "atonement" through blood, rather than through the whole offering or through other aspects of an offering). (4) "Atonement" through the sin-offering was for sins of weakness only, not for the full range of all kinds of sins. The sin-offering did not deal with "sins of a high hand," which are sins of deliberate rebellion. It only dealt with sins committed because of a person's weak resistance, not sins committed in unbelief or outright rebellion (see comments on Lev. 4:2 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading by mistake). Therefore, the "atonement" provided by the sin-offering was not adequate to picture the removal of the sins of a lost person through the blood of Jesus. Moses had already struggled with the question of forgiveness for open rebellion when he sought for Israel to be restored to God after the sin of the Golden Calf. Jehovah showed him in Exodus 32:30-34, 34:6-10 that that kind of sin could be removed only through God's grace and that no human effort of any kind could obtain forgiveness for it. "Atonement" through the sin-offering had to mean something other than regeneration. (5) "Atonement" through the offerings provided for the removal of ritual uncleanness as well as for the

removal of sin (Lev.14:19-20,29,53,15:15,30). Therefore, something other than regeneration had to be involved.

When all of these factors are taken together, they show clearly that the idea of "atonement" in the Old Testament was a different concept from atonement through the blood of Jesus. The "atonement" referred to in Leviticus and other Old Testament Scriptures referred to removing any barrier that stood between a person and God. It dealt with restoration of fellowship between God and a believer that had been broken because of weakness to sin. The covering that provided that kind of restoration was brought about by human deeds, as well as by God's grace. The logical conclusion is that the "atonement" described in Leviticus refers to removing sin from the life of a believer, rather than the washing away or pardoning the sins of a lost person. It symbolized restoring one of God's people to His fellowship rather than admitting a lost person to a relationship with God. It referred to covering a believer from the sins that had crept into his life rather than covering a lost man from the wrath of God. It involved forgiveness, but not the kind of forgiveness that is like a judge's pardon for the just penalty for a crime. Rather it is like the forgiveness that one friend gives to another as he puts away the resentments that have come into his heart because of some breach of fellowship. People who are saved and are in covenant relationship with God always have needed and do now need that kind of forgiveness and covering, whether they were Old Testament worshipers or are New Testament believers. Believers are still weak toward sin and often fail. God forgives believers and restores us to His fellowship when we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. It is not necessary for us to receive again a pardon from the penalty of sin, because that transaction was fully taken care of when we first trusted Jesus as our Savior.

In the light of all of these facts, it should be clear that "atonement" is not a good translation for the Hebrew word that is found in this verse. The literal meaning of the word is "covering," and translating the word in that manner is far more accurate and far less misleading than translating it as "atonement," even though that practice has a

long and honored tradition among both Jews and Christians. Therefore, the translation “covering” will be used consistently throughout this commentary.⁶

The meaning of this verse is that the animal symbolized the worshiper’s total surrender to God which provided to him covering from sins that came into his life even though he was in covenant relationship with God.

Verse 5. And he shall kill the bull before Jehovah, and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall offer the blood, and splash the blood round about on the altar that [is before] the entrance to The Tent of the Meeting.

And he shall kill the bull. The words translated “bull” literally mean “the son of the herd.” “The herd” means that the offering was to be of the cow family. “Son” means it was to be a male, in order words, a bull. The Hebrew word applied to a bull of any age. It did not specify the age of the animal but its gender. In only two instances in later instructions was a young animal definitely required for a rededication-offering. In Leviticus 9:3 the offering of a kid, that is, a young goat, was required. In Leviticus 14:10 the offering of a lamb, that is, a young sheep, was required. (See comments on Lev. 4:3 in MESSAGE 2 under the heading a pristine bull.) In all other instances, the offerer was free to choose an animal of any age for his offering. Instructions recorded in Leviticus 22:27 show that an animal used for any offering at the sanctuary was to be at least a week old, but that

⁶ As inadequate as the translation “atonement” is, most English versions translate the noun form of this Hebrew word as “atonement” and the verb form as “to make atonement” or “to atone.” LB translates them consistently in that manner,

* Footnote continues on right column

* Footnote continues from left column

except in this verse, it translates the noun form as “substitute,” and in 2 Samuel 21:3 it translates the verb form as “to rid ourselves of this guilt.” MV translates the two forms with various forms of “to expiate.” GNB has no consistent way of translating either form. It most often omits the noun form altogether. It translates the verb form by such expressions as “to take away sins,” “to perform the ritual,” “to make up for the wrong that was done,” and “the sacrifices by which God forgives sins.”

verse gives the required minimum age, not the maximum age. The fact that the rededication-offering was not limited to a young bull is supported by the fact that later Jehovah commanded Gideon to offer a bull that was seven years old as a rededication-offering (Jud. 6:25-26). An Israelite who brought a bull as a rededication-offering could vary the age of the animal according to what he could afford. If he was wealthy and could afford an older, larger animal, the offering of a young calf would have seemed cheap and insincere. But, if he was not so wealthy and could afford only a young bull, a requirement that he offer a more expensive animal would have been oppressive. Regardless of the age of the animal, the symbolism was the same. It was the meaning of the offering, not the age of the animal, that interested Jehovah. But the animal did need to be a male, for the reasons explained under verse 3.

Considerable discussion has been given as to whether the worshiper or the priest was to kill the animal. It is instructive to notice that in every description of an animal offering in these basic instructions, the slaying of the animal is mentioned before the priest is introduced into the ceremony (Lev. 1:5,11; 3:2,8,13; 4:15,24,29,33). In Leviticus 4:4 and Lev. 8:15,19,23, the priests clearly killed the offering; but in those instances the priests were the offerers. The strong indication is that the plan was for the offerer to kill the animal. No doubt, this procedure was to dramatize forcefully that the worshiper was slaying his own ambitions and will and giving up his life to God. That the animal represented his surrendered life shown best when the worshiper killed the animal himself.

The word translated “kill” here means “to slaughter an animal.” It was used almost exclusively to refer to ceremonial slaughtering of animals for offerings at The Tabernacle. The word is an entirely different one from the word that is translated “kill” in the sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13). That word means “to murder.” The word in this verse implies no moral evil.

before Jehovah. Verse 3 stated that the offering was to be presented “at the entrance to The Tabernacle of Meeting.” Here that same location is called “before Jehovah,” because The Tabernacle

was Jehovah's dwelling (see comments on Lev. 8:10 in MESSAGE 1 under the heading the Tabernacle and all that was in it). When the Israelites approached The Tabernacle, they approached Jehovah. The point of the offering was not simply to perform a ritual, but to portray an actual encounter with Jehovah God. When they stood before The Tabernacle, symbolically and in reality they stood before God.

The Israelites were free to approach The Tabernacle at any time. Their freedom to present offerings to God at any time symbolized the fact that Jehovah was open to receiving them anytime they sought His presence in their hearts. Jehovah never taught the Israelites that they could approach Him only at one spot in the whole world. The books of Genesis and Exodus are full of incidents where people approached God wherever they were--in deserts, on mountains, under trees, at home, in foreign lands, anywhere. The offerings were not meant to restrict their freedom to approach God anywhere. They were meant to symbolize or illustrate what approaching God meant and what it would produce in their lives anywhere they approached God.

and Aaron's sons, the priests. At this point the priests took over the ceremony and completed it. The involvement of the priest shows that the ceremony was a symbol of a spiritual experience, not the real experience itself. A true experience with God is a matter of the heart. If the worshiper had completed the ceremony, it would have been easy for him to conclude that the mere performance of the rite secured for him the favor of God. When the priest performed the ceremony for him, it showed that the ceremony was a symbol that represented the real experience that was happening in the worshiper's heart.

The priests here are called "Aaron's sons." Jehovah had already designated Aaron and his sons as His priests (Ex. 27:21; 28:1). Aaron was designated as the leader of the priests and was given special preeminence among them (Ex. 28:2-43). In other words, he was the "high priest," though that term is not used until Leviticus 21:10. This verse mentions only "Aaron's sons," that is, the ordinary priests, indicating that they, not the high priest,

ordinarily officiated at the altar (compare Lev. 1:7,8,11; 2:2; 3:2,5,8,13; 6:14). The root meaning of the Hebrew word for "priest" is not known to us. Therefore, the word itself throws no light on what the work and duties of an Israelite priest were. Their duties are revealed through descriptions of the offerings and other ceremonies.

shall offer the blood, and splash the blood. The first thing the priest was to do with the slaughtered animal was to drain the blood from its veins into a bowl and then splash it on the sides of the altar. The word translated "splash" means "to toss" or "to throw." Not just a little of the blood was "sprinkled." Rather, all of it was "tossed out" of the bowl onto the sides of the altar, a fact that is recognized by the translations of RSV, SGV, NEB, DRV, JB, NAB, ABV, and MV. The two verbs are correlative perfects, showing that the "offering" and the "tossing" were not two actions but one. In a very real way, the blood of the animal was its life (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11,14; Deut. 12:23). Since the animal represented the worshiper, the blood symbolized the life of the worshiper. Pouring the blood on Jehovah's altar symbolized that the worshiper was pouring out his life to Jehovah and that Jehovah was receiving his life for service (see comments on Lev. 4:5-7,25 in MESSAGE 2).

The pouring out of the blood also had another even more significant meaning. Since it was not the worshiper's blood that was poured out but the blood of an animal that was poured out for in and in his behalf, it clearly symbolized that the blood of someone else had to be poured out for the worshiper to receive the benefits of the offering. It was self-evident that the blood of an animal was no substitute for the life of a human being, so the animal's blood represented the life of someone who would be a suitable and worthy substitute for the worshiper.

The background of animal offerings that preceded Israel's Sinai experience surely was intended to inform the worshiper concerning who that worthy offering was going to be. God had told the Serpent in the Garden of Eden that he was going to crush the heel of a Seed of Eve, while the Seed was going to crush his head. Believers in Jehovah had been looking for that Seed ever since. God

gave Abraham an experience that greatly enhanced believer's understanding of that MESSAGE to the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. Abraham had great hopes that his son Isaac would be that promised Seed. While he treasured that hope, Jehovah told him to go the Mount Moriah and offer Isaac as an offering to God. We recognize that God was testing Abraham's faith and that Abraham passed that test. However, surely God intended that experience to have a much deeper significance. Was offering Isaac on Mount Moriah the fulfillment of the crushing of the heel of the Seed of Eve, and was it also the means God would use to crush the Serpent's heel. As it turned out, when Abraham stretched out his hand to take the knife that he was going to plunge through Isaac's heart, Jehovah called out to him and told him not to harm his son, because now he known that Abraham would withhold nothing from Him. His preventing Abraham from harming Isaac also revealed that Isaac was not the promised Son who would crush the Serpent's head. If he was not the son whose heel the Serpent would crush, he also was not the Son who would crush the Serpent's head. Believers had to wait still longer and continue to look for that promised Son to come.

When God taught Israel about offering animal offerings and about pouring out their blood around the altar, He must have intended them to understand that the animal was symbolic of the promised Son. It further clarified what God had taught Abraham. It revealed that the crushing of the heel of the promised Son meant that the Son was going to die and give His life in order to save and sanctify His people. Every time the Israelites offered an animal at the altar of God they were to understand that the promised Son was going to come some day and die to provide the perfect offering that would cover all their sins.

The rededication-offering symbolized the total surrender of a worshiper's life to God, and it provided covering for the sins that came into his life after he first entered into covenant relationship with God and received pardon from the penalty he owed for all his sins. He was to understand that the offering of the life of the promised Son was not only necessary for obtaining pardon, but also for being restored to fellowship when that fellowship

was broken by sin that came into his life after He first entered into covenant with God. Pouring out the blood of the animal offering meant that the offering of the promised Son was going to pay the price that was required for covering every aspect of the damage that sin brought to his life. It symbolized that the offering of the promised Son was going to be effective not only in paying the price required for him to be restored to God but also the price that was required to keep him in that relationship. The offering of the promised Son was going to effective for redemption and also for sanctification.

round about on the altar. The blood was not poured on the ground around the altar but on all sides of the altar. The altar represented experiences with God. Splashing the blood on the altar showed that the life of the worshiped that was represented by the blood was not wasted. It was offered up to God so it would belong to Him for service. It also represented that the blood of the promised Son was not going to be wasted. It was going to accomplish its purpose of covering the worshiper from all of his sins.

The Hebrew word used in this verse for "altar" means "place of slaughter" and is based on the same root as the title for the "slaughter-offering," which is described in Chapter 3. It is not the same word as the word translated "kill" in this same verse. Thus, the name of the altar was especially connected with the slaughter-offering. On the other hand, the altar was most often called the "altar of rededication-offering" (Ex. 30:28; 31:9; 35:16; 38:1; 40:6,10,29; Lev. 3:5; 4:7,18,25). Thus, the altar usually was associated closely with the rededication-offering. Probably its close association with the rededication-offering was because the whole ceremony of the rededication-offering was conducted at the altar, whereas major portions of the ceremony of other offerings were conducted elsewhere (homage-offering, Lev. 6:16-18; sin-offering, Lev. 6:26-30; offense-offering, Lev. 7:6-10; slaughter-offering, Lev. 7:14-21,30-36).

that [is before] the entrance to The Tent of Meeting. The words "is before" are not found in the original text. They are added to make the

meaning clearer. Exodus 40:6 described the altar in exactly that position, in front of The Tabernacle. The purpose of this phrase was to identify definitely which altar was meant, since another altar (the altar of incense) was located inside The Tabernacle (Ex. 30:1-10). The altar on which offerings were roasted was in the courtyard in front of The Tabernacle.

Verse 6. **And he shall skin the rededication-offering, and cut it into its pieces.**

And he shall skin the rededication-offering.

The second step in the priest's responsibility was to skin the animal, that is, remove its hide. This chapter does not give instructions concerning what was to be done with the hide, but verses 7-9 describe the items that were to be placed on the altar, and the hide is not among them. Leviticus 7:8, states that the hide became the property of the priest who officiated at the ceremony. It was the whole animal beneath the hide that was burned or rather roasted on the altar. It is logical to assume that the hide represented the body of the worshiper, while the meat beneath the hide represented the inner life of the worshiper. Roasting the meat beneath the hide on the altar was another symbol of the worshiper's surrendering his heart and inner life to God.

The word "priest" in this verse is singular, whereas in the previous verse it is plural. The plural was used in the previous verse to indicate that the part of the priests in the ceremony was beginning to be described. The singular is used in this verse to indicate that only one priest usually officiated at any one offering. There is no indication that the singular was used to designate Aaron, while the plural was used to designate his sons.

and cut it into its pieces. The meat of the animal was to be cut apart into its natural pieces.

Verse 7. **And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and shall arrange wood on the fire:**

The expression "the sons of Aaron" is plural and refers to the ordinary priests. "Aaron the priest" is singular, so the word "priest" here refers

to Aaron. The preparation of the wood and the fire was the responsibility of the ordinary priests. First he was to place fire on the altar, which evidently meant burning coals. Then he was to arrange wood on the coals in an orderly fashion, so as to produce a controlled fire. He was to perform these actions as a representative of the worshiper, symbolizing the fact that an Israelite who desired to surrender his life to God was called upon to do all that was necessary to burn up his self will and selfish desires and let God have his whole life.

Verse 8. **And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall arrange the pieces, [including] the head, and the fat, on the wood that [is] on the fire that [is] on the altar:**

All of the separated pieces of the animal were to be arranged in an orderly fashion on the altar, including the head and the fat. This signified that every part of the inner life had to be surrendered. The inner life of the worshiper had many aspects. Each facet of that life had to be surrendered separately—his will, his emotions, his ambitions, his drives, his loves, his desires, his hates, his everything. The surrender of the worshiper's life was not a monolithic action, but a conscious commitment of every separate inner facet of himself to God.

It also symbolized that the entire life of the promised Son was going to become an offering to cover all the sins of the worshiper. His body as well as his blood was to be broken and offered up to God as an offering for the sins of mankind.

Verse 9. **And he must wash its entrails and its legs in water: and the priest shall roast all on the altar. [This is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.**

And he must wash its entrails and its legs in water. These words are a continuation of the action of placing the whole animal beneath its hide on the altar. Before the meat was placed on the altar, the priest was to wash its entrails and its feet. These parts could have been expected to be dirty--the entrails from the blood and body fluids that were released in the slaughtering, and the legs from the dust of the ground as the animal was led to The

Tabernacle. The washing signified the fact that, when an Israelite surrendered his life to God, his life was to be clean inside and out. The offerer was to seek, with God's help, to rid his life of everything that was sinful or unbecoming, inwardly and outwardly. The fact that only parts of the animal were expected to be dirty and needed to be washed is another indication that the animal represented a life that already belonged to God. The worshiper's life already essentially was clean because he was in covenant relationship with God, but still some dirt or sin was on him because of living in the world. So, totally dedicating his life to God included removing any dirtiness or sin that had come into his life through temptation and weakness.

and the priest shall roast all on the altar.

The word translated "roast" literally means "to cause to smoke." Burning in a flaming fire does cause some smoke, but roasting over open coals causes more smoke. Part of the flavor of meat roasted over open coals comes from the smoke. The Israelites had a different word that described burning an object in a blazing fire. That word was used to describe the burning bush that Moses saw on Mount Horeb (Ex. 3:2), the burning of the outskirts of the camp when Jehovah was angered by constant complaints from the people in the wilderness (Num. 11:1,3), and the blazing on the mountain when Jehovah revealed the Ten Commandments or the Ten Words (Deut. 4:11; 5:23; 9:15). This word described a more controlled burning and is best translated as "roasting."

If the Israelites had burned the offerings in a roaring fire, the odor would have been offensive. If they roasted them slowly over glowing coals, the smell would have been delightful. Since the instructions in Leviticus concerning the offerings keep emphasizing that they were a "soothing fragrance in God's nostrils," we should understand that God expected the meat to be slowly roasted until it turned to ashes, not rapidly burned. Roasting all the parts of the animal on the altar completed the picture of a totally yielded life.

[This is] a rededication-offering. KJV supplies the words "to be" before the name of the offering. Other versions supply "for" or "as." Instead of these words, it would be better to insert a

dash, to indicate that these words are a summary statement of what this offering was. It was not the roasting of the meat alone that was the rededication-offering, but everything that was done from the moment the worshiper arrived at the altar until the offering had been reduced to ashes constituted the rededication-offering. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that this same identical phrase occurs in verses 13 and 17, except that there the word "it" is added. In those verses, KJV and most other versions recognize that these words are a summary statement. In all three cases, the meaning comes through most clearly in English by translating, "[This is] a rededication-offering." It means that the preceding description defined a rededication-offering and described how it was to be offered.

a fire-offering. This expression translates one word in the Hebrew. The Hebrew word was another term that referred to all of the offerings that were presented at the altar. It is another name for the Leviticus offerings that does not have an English equivalent. This name came from the Hebrew word for "fire" and is best translated "fire-offering." It referred to any offering that was roasted on the altar. The term "fire-offering" seems to have originated at Sinai. Its first use in the Pentateuch was in instructions given to Moses concerning the priests (Ex. 29:18,25,41; 30:20). It occurs frequently in Leviticus and Numbers, but only four times in later Scriptures.

The use of this word in conjunction with the name of the rededication-offering shows the inadequacy of translating the name for the "rededication-offering" as "burnt offering" or "burnt sacrifice." Using either of those translations makes the words "a burnt offering, a fire offering" sound repetitious, whereas their original meanings of the two words are not at all the same. The two words, properly translated, do not repeat but complement each other. The translation should be "[This is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering." It means that the previous description has defined a rededication-offering and that it was one type of fire-offering.⁷

⁷ KJV usually translates this term as "offering made by fire" but also renders it as "sacrifice made by fire." ASV always and NWT usually translate it as "offering made by fire," RSV

a soothing fragrance to Jehovah. The word translated “fragrance.” was used to refer to any kind of odor. The word translated “soothing” comes from a root that means “to rest.” It is a noun that means “a rest,” “a quieter,” “a soother,” or “a tranquilizer.” In this verse it is used in apposition to “fragrance.” These words indicated that, as the offering was roasted on the altar, it gave forth a fragrance that was soothing, comforting, or pleasing to Jehovah. A little freer translation that presents the idea exactly is, “[This is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering that smells good to Jehovah.” The significance was that the offering was comforting to God because it symbolized a totally surrendered life. JB reads, “and the fragrance of it will appease Yahweh,” which is not translation but serious misinterpretation. Appeasement is not something that Jehovah accepted. Loving surrender without an ulterior motive pleases and soothes Him like a delightful perfume.

The soothing fragrance of the offering should convince the reader that the offerings were not actually burned, but rather roasted. The smell of The Tabernacle was like prime rib beef roasting over open coals.

(b) Of the flock (1:10-13)

and NASB usually as “offering by fire,” SGV always as “sacrifice,” and JB usually as “burnt offering.” NEB seriously mistranslates it as “food-offering.” ABV alternates between “offering made by fire” and “offering by fire.” MV alternates among these two renderings and “fire-offering,” while also occasionally using other similar renderings. NAB renders the term “oblation,” except in a few references where the word is omitted in the translation. The LB translators act as if they were in a contest to see how many different renderings it might be possible to use, employing ten different renderings in Leviticus alone, as well as omitting it altogether in eight references. To add to its confusion, it most frequently renders the word as “burnt offering,” which is also its most frequent rendering for “rededication-offering.” DRV has absolutely no consistent way of translating it and often as not omits it altogether. This term has been much abused by the translators. Fortunately the more recent HCSB does better and consistently translates the name as “fire offering,” except that twice it translates the name as “offering made by fire” and once as “burning up an offering.”

Verses 10-13. **10 And if his offering [is] of the flock, [that is], of sheep or of goats, for a rededication-offering; he must offer a pristine male.**

11 And he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before Jehovah’s face, and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall splash its blood on the altar round about.

12 And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that [is] on the fire that [is] on the altar.

13 And he must wash the entrails and the legs with water, and the priest shall offer and roast all on the altar. It [is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.

And if his offering is of the flock, [that is] of sheep or of goats. These verses describe a second type of rededication-offering--an offering from the flock, that is, a sheep or a goat. The words translated “sheep” and “goats” both seem to refer to animals of any age. In later instructions, a full-grown sheep was required for certain public occasions (Ex. 29:15; Lev. 8:2; 9:2; 16:3,5), while a yearling lamb was required for certain other public occasions (Ex. 29:38; Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 14:10; 23:12,18; Num. 6:14; 28:3,4,9). On still other public occasions, both were required (Lev. 23:18; Num. 28:11,19,27; 29:2,8,13,17,20,23,26,29,32,36). But an ordinary Israelite who offered a regular rededication-offering evidently was free to offer a sheep or goat of whatever age he chose. The principle, procedure, and symbolism were the same as in the case of bulls offered as rededication-offerings (see comments on Lev.1:5 under the heading and he shall kill the bull).

The main purpose for allowing variety in the animals offered seems to have been to make it possible for persons of lesser means to offer an offering. A sheep or a goat was less expensive than a bull, but it was just as acceptable to Jehovah. Jehovah was primarily interested in the dedicated life, not in the value of the animal used to express it.

The offering of a sheep or a goat is described in less detail than the offering of a bull. Four items mentioned in connection with the

offering of a bull are omitted here: the necessity for the offering to be presented at the sanctuary, the pressing of the offerer's hands on the animal's head, the skinning of the animal, and the placing of the wood and fire on the altar. The reason for these omissions is simply to avoid unnecessary repetition.

And he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before Jehovah's face. This instruction is the only detail mentioned in these verses that was not given with regard to the offering of a bull. The words are a more detailed explanation of "before Jehovah" in verse 5. The Tabernacle was always placed so as to face the east (Ex. 27:13-16; 38:13-15), with the altar of rededication-offering right in front of it (Ex. 40:6). When a worshiper brought his offering, he was not to offer it facing the altar but facing The Tabernacle, because it was The Tabernacle that represented the presence of God. As He faced The Tabernacle to present his offering, he was to stand on the right side of the altar, which was the north side. The priest evidently was to stand on the east side of the altar, also facing The Tabernacle.

It [is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah. The Hebrew language does not require writing out the pronoun "it," because it is included in the verb ending. For that reason, the word was omitted in this same expression in Leviticus 1:9 (see comments on that verse above under the heading [This is] a rededication-offering). However, in this verse, the word "it" is added to place emphasis on it. Probably the word was written here to indicate that offering a sheep or a goat was just as acceptable and approved as a rededication-offering as a bull was and that its fragrance was just as soothing to Jehovah, if that was all the worshiper could afford and if he offered it with a sincere heart. The meaning of the offering was the same, regardless of the animal that was used.

(c) Of birds (1:14-17)

Verse 14. **And if his offering to Jehovah [is] a rededication-offering of birds, then he shall offer his offering from turtledoves, or from young pigeons.**

And if his offering to Jehovah [is] a rededication-offering of birds. A description of a third type of rededication-offering begins here. In this case, the offering was of a small bird. This offering was still less expensive than an offering of the flock. It provided a way for the poorest of the Israelites to present a rededication-offering. Jehovah was just as interested in receiving the devotion from the poor as from the rich.

then he shall offer his offering from turtledoves or from young pigeons. The kinds of birds that could be offered were both small birds of the pigeon family. They were clean birds (Lev. 11:13-19), readily available, and of such disposition that they could be easily caged or taught to nest in the yards of an owner. These birds followed the same pattern as the animal offerings--domesticated and clean. It has been claimed by many that these birds could not have been available in the wilderness, but it is a gross injustice to the ingenuity of the Israelites to suppose that they could not or would not have taken their domesticated birds with them, just as they took their animals. Chickens were not known in Israel or in Egypt at that time, though ancient records show that the Chinese were raising chickens at about the time of Moses. Every indication is that birds of the dove family were the most common domesticated birds at that time among the Israelites.

Verse 15. **And the priest shall offer it on the altar: that is, he shall wring off its head, and shall roast [it] on the altar; and its 5shall be squeezed out on the side of the altar.**

And the priest shall offer it on the altar. The word translated "offer" is the verb that was used to describe presenting any of the offerings (see comments on Lev. 1:2 under the heading "offer an offering"). This statement specifies that the priest should offer the bird offering on the altar, assuming some of the responsibilities that the worshiper would perform in larger offerings. The statement that follows describes in more detail how he was to conduct the offering.

that is, he shall wring off its head, and shall roast [it] on the altar.

The same items that were omitted in the description of an offering from the flock are also omitted here. Undoubtedly, this omission was simply to avoid unnecessary repetition. Some have thought that pressing the hands on the offering was not practiced in the case of birds, because it is not mentioned here. If that is the case, we have to assume that wood and fire also were not placed on the altar in the case of birds, because they also are not mentioned here. Pressing the hands on the offering was an exceedingly important part of a fire-offering ceremony and surely must have been practiced in the case of birds as well as animals.

In the case of birds, the priest always killed the offering instead of the worshiper. He did so by wringing off its head. The symbolism was the same whether the worshiper killed the animal or the priest did it, because the priest acted in behalf of the worshiper (see comments on Lev. 1:5 under the heading And he shall kill the bull). The reason the priest always killed the bird was probably because of the size of the offering and the amount of the blood.

and its blood shall be squeezed out on the side of the altar. The blood of the bird was squeezed and shaken out of the bird directly onto the altar instead of being first drained into a bowl, as was done with the animals. The reason no doubt was the small amount of the blood involved. Not enough blood could be obtained from a bird for the worshiper to kill the bird and then for the priest to collect it in a bowl before splashing it on the altar. The symbolism was the same as in the case of animals (see comments on Leviticus 1:5 above under the heading shall offer the blood and splash the blood).

Verse 16. And he shall remove its gizzard as well as its feathers, and he shall fling it on the east of the altar, in the place of the ashes.

And he shall remove its gizzard as well as its feathers. The word translated “gizzard” occurs only here in the Old Testament. It comes from a root that is connected with digestion. It seems to refer to the craw or gizzard of the bird.

The word translated “feathers” is translated as “filth” by ASV and as “contents” by NEB, making it refer to the dirt and pebbles in the gizzard. This rendering is unwarranted guesswork, because everywhere else the word occurs, it clearly means “feathers.” The feathers could be expected to be dirty by collecting dust from the air, and the gizzard contains grit and sand. As in the case of washing the entrails and legs of animals, removing the gizzard and the feathers of the bird signified that even people in covenant relationship with God still have to struggle to keep sin from their lives. When a worshiper brought his rededication-offering, he was to consciously renounce his sin (see comments on Lev. 1:9 under the heading And he must wash its entrails and its legs in water). A part of dedicating a person’s life to God is casting aside his sins.

and he shall fling it on the east side of the altar, in the place of the ashes. The feathers and gizzard, representing any sinfulness or uncleanness that was in the life of the worshiper, were to be flung into the ashes that accumulated on the east side of the altar. This statement is the first mention of the fact that the ashes that accumulated underneath the grate that covered the altar were to be scraped out of the altar on the east side, that is, away from The Tabernacle. Two reasons may be suggested for this provision. The ashes were to be removed away from The Tabernacle that symbolized God’s presence. Also they were to be removed toward the entrance to the courtyard, making it easier to remove them from the sanctuary. When the gizzard and the feathers were removed from a bird offering, they were to be flung into the ashes that had been scraped out of the altar. The symbolism was the same as that of washing the entrails and feet of the animal. When the ashes were carried away, the feathers and gizzard of the birds were carried away with them, representing the fact that the worshiper, with the help of God, removed evil from his life as he completely dedicated himself to Jehovah.

Verse 17. And he shall tear it open by its wings, but he shall not separate [it]. Then the priest shall roast it on the altar, on the wood that [is] on the fire. It [is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.

And he shall tear it open by its wings. The word translated “tear open” is the same word that was used to refer to cloven or divided hooves of animals. This clause probably means that the priest was to tear the bird open by holding it by its wings and pulling.

but he shall not separate [it]. This statement means that the bird was not to be cut apart into all its pieces, as was the case with the animals. The reason undoubtedly was the smallness of the bird. The symbolism was the same as with the animals. Tearing the bird open represented the opening of every part of the worshiper’s inner life to God and the offering of the whole life of the promised Son to provide covering from sins (see comments under the heading shall offer the blood, and splash the blood in Lev. 1:5 above.).

Then the priest shall roast it on the altar, on the wood that [is] on the fire. The bird was to be offered on the altar in the same way as with animals (see comments on Lev. 1:8 above).

It [is] a rededication-offering, a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah. As in the case of a sheep or a goat, the word “it” is emphasized in this statement to indicate that a bird offering was also an acceptable and approved rededication-offering and that its fragrance was just as soothing to Jehovah if a bird was all the worshiper could afford and if he offered it with a sincere heart (see comments on Lev. 1:9 under the heading [This is] a rededication-offering and on Lev. 1:13 under the heading It [is] a rededication offering . . .).

CHAPTER 2

(3) Homage-offerings (2:1-15)

(a) Of raw flour (2:1-3)

Verse 1. **And when someone offers an offering of homage to Jehovah, his offering may be fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and he shall put frankincense on it.**

And when. See comments on Leviticus 1:1 above under the heading “When.”

someone. The Hebrew word here means “a soul” or “a person.” More obviously than the word “man” found in Leviticus 1:1, it shows that every Israelite could participate in the offerings, female as well as male (see comments on Lev. 1:1 above under the heading a man).

offers an offering of homage to Jehovah. The words translated “offers” and “offering” are both general words that refer to any type of fire-offering. The word translated “homage” specifies a second type of offering that Israelites were to offer on the altar. The name for this type of offering means “tribute” or “homage.” It was used to refer to tribute that one nation or king paid to another to show submission (Jud. 3:15,17,18; II Sam. 8:2,6 I Kings 4:21; II Kings 8:8-9; I Chr. 18:2,6). By paying the tribute money, the subject king acknowledged his submission to the king who had conquered him or who ruled over him. The word also was used to refer to a gift presented willingly by one person to another to show him or her honor or praise (Gen. 32:13,18,20,21; 33:10; 43:15,25,26; I Sam. 10:27; II Kings 8:8,9; 20:12; Dan. 2:46). It probably was used in the second sense in connection with this offering. Combined with the general word for “offering,” it means “offering of homage.” This title is the full name for the second type of offering. The name was usually shortened to the one word “homage.” When shortened in that manner, the word became a name for this particular kind of offering, and it is best translated as “homage-offering.”

This title clearly shows the purpose of this second type of offering. It was to be offered as a way of recognizing the lordship of Jehovah and His ownership of all the possessions of the worshiper. When a worshiper offered a rededication-offering, he symbolized the surrender of his whole life to Jehovah. When a worshiper offered an homage-offering, he symbolized the surrender of all of his possessions to Jehovah. Christians call that principle “stewardship.”

Homage-offerings were known to Jehovah’s people before Sinai. In fact, it was the name of the first recorded offering ever offered to God by men, when Cain and Abel brought homage-offerings to

God (Gen. 4:3,4,5). At Sinai, prior to the description given in this chapter, homage-offerings were mentioned twice in instructions to Moses (Ex. 29:41; 30:9) and once in describing an offering that was offered by Moses (Ex. 40:29).⁸

⁸ KJV most often translates the name of this offering as “meat offering.” In the days of King James, the word “meat” had a broader meaning that it has today. It meant “food,” and KJV uses the word with that meaning. Today translating the name as “meat” is totally inappropriate because this offering was the only offering that consisted of flour or bread instead of meat. However, translating the name as “food” is also inappropriate, because it suggests that the offering was presented to meet Jehovah’s need for nourishment. Such an idea is totally pagan and has no place in connection with an offering to Jehovah. Jehovah created and owns everything. He does not need anyone to feed Him. At other times, KJV often renders the name by the much less distinctive words “offering,” “oblation,” and “sacrifice.” None of these words even gets close to the distinctive meaning of the Hebrew name. In almost all instances in which KJV translates “meat offering,” ASV substitutes “meal offering.” This translation is an ingenious device for changing the name only slightly while changing the meaning greatly. It describes more closely the composition of the offering, since the homage-offering consisted of processed grain, whether cooked or uncooked. This name avoids the pagan implications, but it does not even come close to representing the idea found in the Hebrew name. This translation becomes especially misleading when it is noted that on at least three occasions the Hebrews used this name to refer to animal offerings (Gen. 4:4; I Sam. 2:17,29; Mal. 1:13). In those passages, the name applied to other types of offerings to show that those offerings also expressed homage. The Hebrew name “homage-offering” contains a completely different idea from “meat” or “food” or “meal.” It does not emphasize the form of the offering but the significance of the offering. It shows that the worshiper recognized God’s ownership of all of his possessions and that he was committed to using them as God directed. Where KJV uses a translation other than “meat offering,” ASV does the same, employing “offering” or “oblation.” RSV and SGV follow the same practice as ASV, except that they use the translation “cereal offering” and practices more variety in employing other translations. NASB and NEB also follow the same practice but use “grain offering” in the verses where KJV uses “meat offering.” DRV and JB do not attempt to devise a distinctive title for this offering but use a great variety of translations. DRV most often uses “sacrifice,” while JB most often uses “oblation.” NIV usually translates the name of this offering as “grain offering,” but it also uses simply “offering” and twice uses “sacrifice.” Other versions use great variety in rendering this term. The most frequent translation used by each is: NAB, ABV, and MV “cereal offering”; LB and MWV, “grain offering.” HCSB usually translates it as “grain offering”; however, it translates the name 34 times simply as “offering,” once as “gift,” and once as “sacrifice.” It also shortens the name 22 times into “grain” in passages where two offerings are mentioned together, with the result

his offering may be [of] fine flour. The state of the verb in this clause is imperfect. It can be translated either “will be” or “may be.” The correct translation is “may be” because fine flour was not the only kind of homage-offering that was permitted. Just as Jehovah authorized several types of rededication-offerings, He also authorized several types of homage-offerings. These words introduce the first type, which was an offering of fine flour. It refer to grain ground into flour but as yet uncooked. Bread or other pastries had not been made from it. It was raw flour.

The word translated “fine flour” refers to the best flour available in that day. It is described in Genesis 18:6 as flour to be used for an honored guest, in 1 Kings 5:2 as flour to be used in a king’s household, and in Ezekiel 16:18, 19 as an example of luxurious food. Therefore, some interpreters conclude that “fine flour” was of such high quality that it was used only by the wealthy. However, Leviticus 23:17 shows that it was also used in at least some of the common households of Israel. The best understanding of its nature is that it was flour made of wheat, in contrast to “course flour” (Num. 15:20,21, Neh. 10:37; Ezek. 44:30); which was made of barley. Barley is a courser, darker grain. Exodus 29:2 and 1 Chronicles 21:23 confirm that conclusion by specifically stating that flour used in an homage-offering was wheat flour. Wheat flour was required for an homage-offering because only the best was worthy of an offering presented to the Owner of all the worshiper’s property.

The amount of fine flour to be used in presenting this offering is not stated here. Later references show that it varied according to several factors. Four different rules are found in later references: (1) when offered alone (Lev. 6:10), (2) when offered in connection with the cleansing of a

that the translation becomes “grain and drink offerings” or “grain and incense offerings.” All these translations are so

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varied and inexact that it is almost as if the translators joined in a conspiracy to confuse English readers and to prevent them from being able to discern the distinctiveness of this offering.

person who had the disease tsaraath (Lev. 14:10,21), (3) when offered in connection with the waving of an omer of first-fruits (Lev. 23:13), and (4) when offered on festival occasions in connection with rededication-offerings or slaughter-offerings (Num. 15:4-10). (See comments on each of the Leviticus passages in MESSAGES 6, 17, and 31.)

and he shall pour oil on it. Olive oil was the oil commonly used in Israel. It is recognized even today as a fine and high quality oil. In the homage-offering, it represented richness. The pouring of oil over fine flour added to the picture that this was an offering presented to the One who was Lord of the worshiper and Owner of all his property. The amount of oil to be used in an homage-offering varied according to the amount of fine flour that was used. The rule that governed the amount of oil to be used is given in Numbers 15:4-10.

and put frankincense on it. Frankincense was an incense made from the fragrant resin of frankincense trees. They grew mainly in the deserts of Arabia, and the fragrant sap had to be imported into Israel. Since frankincense trees grew in the desert, they produced only a small amount of sap. Gathering the sap was a long, laborious task. After droplets were gathered, they were dried into pebbles for use in incense pots and for shipping all around the Middle East. These factors made frankincense scarce and expensive. It was used in the homes of kings and the wealthy to produce a pleasant odor. Frankincense added to the homage-offering enlarged the picture that this was an offering made to the Lord of all.

Verse 2. **And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests, and he shall grasp from it one of his fist's full of its fine flour, and some of its oil, along with all of its frankincense. Then the priest shall roast its representative portion on the altar. [It is] a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.**

And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. This offering also was no longer to be offered privately. It was to be offered only at The Tabernacle, under the supervision of the duly appointed priests.

and he shall grasp from it one of his fist's full of its fine flour, and some of its oil, along with all of its frankincense. The priest was to reach into the sack or basket of flour the worshiper had brought and take out one fist full of it. He was to mix it with some of the oil and all of the frankincense.

Then the priest shall roast its representative portion on the altar. The mixture was called "a representative portion" of the offering. The word so translated often was used to mean "a memorial." It was applied to a reminder of some event or person, and thus it was a memorial of that event or person. In this case the flour, oil, and frankincense mixture was a memorial of the rest of the offering. It represented all that the offering stood for. The priest was to roast that representative portion of the offering on the altar, which meant it was offered to Jehovah. Since the mixture represented the whole offering, it showed that the whole offering and all it represented was surrendered to God. It meant that the offerer recognized that all his property and possessions belonged to God.

[It is] a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah. This memorial portion of the homage-offering was a fire-offering that gave a soothing fragrance to God, just like the rededication-offering (see comments on Lev. 1:9 above under the heading a soothing fragrance to Jehovah).

Verse 3. **And the remainder of the homage-offering [shall be] for Aaron and for his sons. It is a holiness of holinesses out of the fire-offerings of Jehovah.**

And the remainder of the homage-offering [shall be] for Aaron and for his sons. The remainder of the flour and oil was to be given to the priests for their use. Thus, it helped support those who gave their full lives in the service of Jehovah. The portion given to the priests was the major part of the offering. The memorial portion was a symbol that the worshiper yielded his property to God and intended to use it in a way that pleased Him. The major portion of the offering was also surrendered to God but used to help provide support for His priests. It showed that the worshiper yielded his possessions to God and intended to use them to

support and advance His work. The worshiper did not literally give away all of his possessions. He continued to own them, but he yielded them up to God and committed to using them according to God's will.

In this verse, "Aaron and his sons" are mentioned, in contrast to previous references that mentioned only "Aaron's sons" (Lev. 1:7,8,11; 2:2). This statement shows that the high priest and the ordinary priests were to share in the eating this offering and the portions of the other offerings that were to be given to the priests. The high priest was to receive his share, and thus his support was to be provided from the offerings, though usually the ordinary priests officiated at the altar. (See also Lev. 2:10; 6:16,18; 7:10,31; 7:34; and comments on Lev. 6:26 in MESSAGE 6.)

[It is] a holiness of holinesses. This statement is the first mention in the book of Leviticus of the ideas "holy" and "most holy." The idea of "holiness" is one of the most important concepts in the book. Though it is used in this verse for the first time in Leviticus, the Israelites already were familiar with the concept. Various words based on its root occur 57 times in Exodus in MESSAGES God gave to Moses at Sinai.

The basic meaning of the root is "to set apart" or "to be separated." Sometimes it was used to refer to separating a person or object from something that was evil or unpleasant, such as, Israel's uncleanness (Lev. 16:19), war (Jer. 6:4; 51:27,28; Joel 3:9; Micah. 3:5), destruction (Deut. 22:9; Jer. 22:7), or punishment (Jer. 12:3; Zeph. 1:7). Usually, however, it was used to refer to separating out a person or object to Jehovah God. They were items that belonged to God or to His service. Some of the persons and objects that were set apart to God were: the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11), the priests (Ex. 29:1), the sanctuary and its furnishings and vessels (Ex. 40:9-11), the first-born males of Israel (Ex. 13:2), all the people of Israel (Ex. 19:10-14), Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:23), the wave-offering (Ex. 29:27), and the priestly garments (Lev. 8:30). Also, sometimes it was said that Jehovah Himself was "separated out" or "set apart" in the midst of the people of Israel (Lev. 22:32), meaning that Jehovah was different from and above all other

persons and things. For a person or object to be truly "set apart" to Jehovah, he or it had to be dedicated to Jehovah both by God and by people (Lev. 20:7-8; 21:8). In other words, Jehovah chose the person or object for Himself, but that person also had to choose to surrender himself or his object to God. Then he or it became truly "set apart" or "holy."

When a person or object was "set apart" to Jehovah, Jehovah expected that he or it would take on Jehovah's attributes or character and would reflect His likeness (Lev. 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8). In the case of objects, reflecting Jehovah's likeness meant to be physically clean and beautiful and also ceremonially clean. The expectation of physical cleanliness was shown by washing the people's and the priests' clothes (Ex. 19:10,14; Lev. 6:47; Num. 8:7,21), the washing of parts of offerings offered on the altar (Ex. 29:17; Lev. 1:9,13; 8:21; 9:14), and the white linen of the priests' clothes (Ex. 28:42; 39:28; Lev. 6:10; 16:4,23,32). The expectation of physical beauty was shown by the gold, silver, brass, and many colored cloths of The Tabernacle and its furnishings (Ex. 25:9; 27:21) and the glory and beauty of the priests' clothes (Ex. 28:2,40). The expectation of ceremonial cleanness was shown by the requirement that only clean animals were to be offered on the altar (Lev. 1:2) and by the ceremonial cleansing of The Tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priests' clothes (Ex. 40:9-16). Thus, the character of Jehovah was to be reflected in objects that were set apart for His service.

In the case of persons, reflecting Jehovah's likeness meant to be morally clean, as well as physically and ceremonially clean. The moral dimension came into the picture when people were considered, because people are moral beings whereas objects are not. The expectation of all three kinds of cleanness in people dedicated to God was shown by the washing of the priests' bodies (Ex. 29:4; 40:12; Lev. 8:6; 16:4,24). Bathing before service at the altar obviously provided physical cleansing, but it was also a means of providing ceremonial cleansing. In addition, ceremonial cleansing symbolized moral cleansing. The requirement of beauty and wholeness was shown by the requirement that priests were to be whole and without blemish to serve at the altar (Lev. 21:16-24)

and by the requirement that the priests were to be ceremonially clean when they ministered at the altar (Lev. 22:1-9). The expectation of moral cleanness was shown by the high moral standards set for the priests and their families (Lev. 21:7-9). However, the most significant way that Jehovah showed that moral cleanness was required of people “set apart” to Him was that, immediately after Israel entered into covenant relationship with Him, He revealed to them the high moral standards of the Ten Commandments or the Ten Words (Ex. 20:1-17). That standard was so high that it continues to be a moral challenge to the world even until this day. Also, Jehovah gave them high standards for their civil law (Ex. 21:1-23:18) and soon afterward revealed regulations concerning the system of clean and unclean, which symbolized moral cleanness (Lev. 11:1-15:33). All of these revelations showed that Jehovah demanded that His character was to be reflected in the people who were “set apart” to belong to Him. Moral cleanness was an essential part of the idea of “holiness” from the very beginning.

Translating the teachings of Leviticus about holiness into English is difficult because the English language uses three different words to express the idea. Those words are: “holy,” “sacred,” and “saintly.” Though all three of those words convey the idea of “holiness,” no one of them can be used to translate all the forms of the Hebrew word. The Hebrew word for holiness has noun, verb, and adjective forms. In English, the word “holy” is an adjective. It has a related verb form “hallow” and a noun form “holiness,” but in English the noun means a quality possessed by a person or object. In Hebrew, it also means the person or object that possesses that quality. Thus, the Hebrews spoke of “a holiness,” which described a person or object that possessed holiness. That expression is not used in English. The word “sacred” is an adjective. It has no related verb form. Its noun form “sacredness” has the same problems as the word “holiness.” The word “saintly” is an adjective. It has a related verb form “sanctify,” but that word has been clouded by conflicting theological interpretations. It also has a noun form “saint,” but that word applies only to persons, not to objects. Therefore, a consistent translation into English of

all the forms of the Hebrew word is almost impossible.

As a result, English translations have alternated among the three words in their renderings of the original. As far as possible, in this commentary all Hebrew words related to this idea will be rendered with the various forms of the word “holy.” (For discussion of various Hebrew words related to this idea, see comments on Lev. 6:16,18 in MESSAGE 5; on Lev. 10:3 in MESSAGE 11; on Lev. 12:4 in MESSAGE 15; on Lev. 16:19 in MESSAGE 20; and on Lev. 22:2 in MESSAGE 27.)

A little further elaboration of the Hebrew use of the noun form of the word is needed. It was often used in construct relationship with another noun to indicate that the object in question possessed the attribute of holiness. Thus, the Hebrews spoke of “ground of holiness” (Ex. 3:5), “convocation of holiness” (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:2,3,4,7,8,21,24,27,35,36,37; Num. 28:18, 25,26; 29:1,7,12), “habitation of holiness” (Ex. 15:13), “sabbath of holiness” (Ex. 16:23), “clothes of holiness” (Ex. 28:2,4; 31:10; 35:21; 39:1; 40:13; Lev. 16:4,32), “crown of holiness” (Ex. 29:6; 39:30; Lev. 8:9), “ointment of holiness” (Ex. 30:25,31; 37:29), “coat of holiness” (Lev. 16:4), “sanctuary of holiness” (Lev. 16:33), and “name of holiness” (Lev. 20:3; 22:2,32). The most satisfactory way to translate these expressions into English is to change the noun “holiness” into the adjective “holy.” Thus, the translation would be “holy ground” or “holy convocation.”

At other times, the word was used by itself to describe an object or a person who was set apart to Jehovah. Thus, such an object was called “a holiness.” Objects or persons referred to in this manner were: the anointing oil (Ex. 30:32,35), the incense for the incense altar (Ex. 30:37), the sabbath (Ex. 31:14,15), the sons of Aaron (Lev. 21:6), and the year of the freedom-blast (Lev. 25:12). But, especially the term was used to refer to The Tabernacle and to the objects that were set aside for the support of the priests and their families.

When used as a reference to The Tabernacle, it was always accompanied by the definite article, so that The Tabernacle was called “The Holiness”

Sometimes the term “The Holiness” referred to the whole of the sacred area, including the court yard (Ex. 30:13,24; 36:1,3,4,6; Lev. 10:4, 17,18; 14:13). At other times, it referred to the outer room of the tent portion of the sacred area (Ex. 26:33; Num. 4:15,20). At still other times, it referred to the inner room of the tent portion (Ex. 28:29,35; 35:19; 39:1,41; Lev. 4:6; 16:2,3,17,20,23,27,33).

However, “the holiness” did not always refer to The Tabernacle. Sometimes it was used to refer to the portions of offerings and other gifts that were set aside for the support of the priests and their families (Ex. 28:38; Lev. 5:15,16; 22:2,3,4,6,7,12,14,15,16; Num. 5:9; 18:19,32; Deut. 12:26). When “holiness” was used as a reference to the things set aside for the support of the priests, it was employed in three different ways: (1) Sometimes it referred to the portions of the fire-offerings that were eaten by the priests and their families (Ex. 29:33,34; Lev. 23:20; Num. 6:20), which were portions of the slaughter-offering (see comments on Lev. 7:12-13 in MESSAGE 7 and on Lev. 28-36 in MESSAGE 8). (2) Sometimes it referred to sources of support for the priests and their families other than the fire-offerings, including: fruit of the fourth year (Lev. 19:24), vows (Lev. 27:30,32,33), and firstlings (Num. 18:17). (3) Sometimes it was employed to refer inclusively to all of the portions that were set aside for the support of the priests and their families (Ex. 28:38; Lev. 5:15,16; 22:2,3,4,6,7,10,12,14,15,16; Num. 5:9; 18:8,19,32; Deut. 12:26).

In addition to the “holy” objects, some objects possessed a special holiness. Those objects were set apart among the set apart objects. Translated literally, the Hebrew expression for these objects is “a holiness of holinesses.” It is adequately translated into English as “a most holy.” KJV and most English versions translate this expression as “a most holy thing.” Objects of special holiness were: The Tabernacle (Ex.26:33,34), the furnishings of The Tabernacle (Ex. 29:37; 30:10,29; 40:10), the incense and bread displayed in The Tabernacle (Ex. 30:36; Lev. 24:9), condemned objects (Lev. 27:28), and the portions of the fire-offerings that were to be eaten only by the priests (Lev. 6:27,27; 27:7; 10:12-13; Num. 18:9-10; see comments on Lev. 6:18 in MESSAGE 5

under the heading whoever touches it must be holy). In Numbers 18:10, the portions eaten only by the priests are called simply “a holiness,” which was appropriate because a most holy object certainly was a holy object.

The expression “a holiness of holinesses” in this verse means that the portion of an homage-offering that went to the priests was one of the objects of special holiness. Portions of the homage-offering that possessed this special holiness were not to be eaten by the priests’ families but only by the priests themselves. When the priests ate the portions of the offerings that were reserved for them, they symbolized Jehovah. Reserving this especially holy portion of the offering for the priests was another way of showing that the worshiper surrendered his possessions to Jehovah and that Jehovah received them.

out of the fire-offerings of Jehovah. See comments on Leviticus 1:9 under the heading a fire-offering.

(b) Of oven-baked bread (2:4)

Verse 4. **And when you bring an offering of homage [consisting of] baked fine flour from an oven, [you must bring] unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers smeared with oil.**

And when you bring an offering of homage. These words begin to describe a second kind of homage-offering. The full name of the offering is used in this verse, as it was in Leviticus 2:1.

[consisting of] baked fine flour from an oven. This second form of the homage-offering is also fine flour, but baked instead of uncooked. The Hebrew words translated “baked fine flour” actually mean “a baked thing of an oven, fine flour,” which could mean bread or cake. In any case, they were to be made from fine flour, or wheat flour (see comments on Lev. 2:1 under the heading his offering may be [of] fine flour)

The oven referred to here appears to have been an outside oven made of clay (see comments on Lev. 11:35 in MESSAGE 14). However, the

word translated “oven” was used in Genesis 15:17 to refer to a pot that moved between separated halves of animal offerings. In that case, the oven in question was light and portable.

[you must bring] unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers smeared with oil. Two kinds of baked goods were allowed. The difference between them is that the first had oil mingled in the dough, while the second had oil smeared over it after it was baked. Both were to be prepared without yeast. The Hebrew word translated “cakes” describes some type of cake, but the type is not clearly defined. Since it was baked without yeast, it probably resembled a flaky pastry.

The Hebrew word translated “wafer” was derived from a root that appears to mean “to be thin.” It seems to have been a flat, thin, hard tack cracker. As in the case of an offering of raw flour, both oil and flour were used, no matter which kind of oven-baked goods were offered.

The symbolism of fine flour and oil was the same as in the offering of raw flour. Both represented the richness that the Owner of the worshiper’s possessions deserves (see comments on Lev. 2:1).

The word translated “smeared” can be translated “anointed.” Some have sought to connect this anointing with the anointing that set apart a person or object for service to God. Such a connection if not warranted, though the word is the same in both cases. That the two “anointings” had different purposes is shown by the fact that the special anointing oil used for anointing persons or objects into God’s service was not employed here (Ex. 30:22-33).

The reason the baked goods were to be prepared without yeast can be understood more easily from statements in Leviticus 2:11-13, so a discussion of this requirement will wait for that point in the text (see comments on Leviticus 2:11 below).

(c) Of grilled bread (2:5-6)

Verse 5. ¶ **And if your homage-offering is from the griddle, it must be fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened.**

A third type of homage-offering was bread cooked on a griddle. This bread would seem to have been more like a pancake than baked bread, except that it would have been flatter and harder than our pancakes since it was made without leaven. KJV and LITV use the translation “baked in a pan.” This translation is not valid. The word “bake” does not occur in the Hebrew. The method of preparing the bread was more like grilling than baking. (See comments on Lev. 6:21 in MESSAGE 6 under the heading It must be made on the griddle, well mixed with oil).

Verse 6. **[You are] to break it in pieces, and you shall pour oil on it. It [is] an homage-offering.**

[You are] to break it in pieces, and you shall pour oil on it. In this case, the oil was both to be mixed in the bread and poured over it. The bread was to be broken into pieces, and the oil poured over it rather than smeared on it. Breaking the bread into pieces may have symbolized that the worshiper was offering every part of his possessions to God.

It [is] an homage-offering. Bread prepared in this way was just as much an homage-offering and just as pleasing to God as the other types.

(d) Of pan-baked bread (2:7-10)

Verses 7-10. 7 ¶ **And if your offering [is] an homage-offering from a pan, it must be made [of] fine flour with oil**

8 And you shall bring the homage-offering that is made in these [ways] to Jehovah, So he shall offer it through the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar.

9 And the priest shall take from the homage-offering a representative portion of it, and he shall roast it on the altar. [It is] a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.

10 And the remainder of the homage-offering [is] for Aaron's and for his sons, a holy of holies from Jehovah's fire-offerings.

A fourth type of homage-offering was another type of cooked bread. The cookware used in this case seems to have been a deep pan rather than a flat griddle. Possibly this pan had a lid. The description in this verse seems to indicate that this type of offering was pan-baked bread.

The procedure to be followed in this case is described as fully as it was in connection with the offering of fine or wheat flour, though the full procedure was not described in connection with the other types of cooked bread. Probably the words "in these [ways]" means that the full description in these verses is meant to apply to all types of cooked bread. Or perhaps the procedure was not described in full in the case of the other types of cooked bread simply to avoid too much repetition. In any case, the procedure was to be the same for all homage-offerings, and the symbolism was the same.

(e) Concerning seasoning
(2:11-13)

[1] Honey and leaven
(2:11-12)

Verse 11. Every homage-offering that you offer to Jehovah must not be made [with] leaven, for all leaven and all honey you must not roast any of it [as] a fire-offering to Jehovah.

This verse begins a discussion of the seasoning to be used in homage-offerings. Honey and yeast were not to be used in preparing the bread for these offerings. Honey was virtually the only type sweetener available to the Israelites and to other peoples of that day. Sweetening foods makes them tasty, but it also tends to encourage spoilage. Yeast in bread makes it soft and light, but it also makes it grow stale and become spoiled more quickly. Homage-offerings represented meaningful, solid, lasting experiences. Making the offering in a way that would cause it to spoil easily would not be a fitting symbol of the permanent commitment that the homage-offerings represented.

The customary explanation of this command is that leaven represents evil, and evil was to be left out of the life of a worshiper of Jehovah. That interpretation fails to acknowledge that these instructions applied to honey as well as to leaven. While leaven was on occasion used to symbolize evil, honey was not. Also, the explanation offered here is more appropriate to the symbolism of the homage-offerings. Dedication of a worshiper's possessions to God would keep them from spoiling or being squandered on sin.

Verse 12. [Concerning] an offering of first-fruits, you must offer them to Jehovah, but they must not rise up as a soothing fragrance.

This verse describes a type of offering to which the prohibition against honey and leaven did not apply. That offering was the giving of first-fruits.

[Concerning] an offering of first-fruits, you must offer them to Jehovah. The word translated "offering" in this verse is the general word that applied to any kind of offering. The word translated "first-fruits" literally means "head." The "head" of an object is its origin or starting point, like the headwaters of a river. Thus, the word means "beginning," though it was also used to mean "first" or "foremost." Some verses where the word was used to mean "beginning" are: Genesis 1:1, "in the beginning"; Genesis 10:10, "the beginning of his kingdom"; Deuteronomy 11:12, "the beginning of the year"; Job 42:12, "his (Job's) beginning"; Proverbs 1:7, "the beginning of knowledge"; Psalm 111:10, "the beginning of wisdom"; Isaiah 46:10, "declaring the end from the beginning"; and Jeremiah 26:1, "the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim" (see also Jer. 27:1; 28:1; 49:34). This verse uses the word to refer to the beginning of a harvest. When the two words "offerings" and "beginnings" are combined, they form the name of a different kind of offering. The name might be accurately translated "beginnings-offering." The name has traditionally been translated "firstfruits" or "first-fruits" or "first fruits." That translation, by any of the three spellings, correctly represents the

content of the offering, so it will be used throughout this writing, with the spelling “first-fruits.”⁹

First-fruits are not mentioned in the Scriptures before Sinai, which indicates that it was a practice Jehovah initiated at Sinai. Jehovah did mention first-fruits twice in MESSAGES to Moses at Sinai before The Tabernacle was completed. In those MESSAGES first-fruits were included in two lists of requirements Jehovah made of Israel. One list was made before Israel’s sin of the Golden Calf (Ex. 23:19). The other was made after that great sin (Ex. 34:26). Both lists simply say that the Israelites were to bring the first-fruits of their ground to the house of Jehovah. Since Jehovah was Owner of all the land and had promised to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites as an inheritance, this requirement was reasonable. He was the Owner of the land and deserved the first and best of its produce.

The instruction given in this verse is that the Israelites were to offer their first-fruits to Jehovah. These words mean that they were to be taken to The Tabernacle and presented to Jehovah there. This requirement is the same as the instructions Jehovah had given in Exodus.

but they must not rise up as a soothing fragrance. This clause adds the stipulation that first-fruits were not to go up in smoke on the altar as a soothing fragrance to Jehovah. Even though first-fruits were to be presented at The Tabernacle, they were not to be offered on the altar. They were not fire-offerings. At first, it seems strange that instructions concerning first-fruits should be given in the midst of instructions concerning fire-offerings. The reason is Jehovah wanted to make it

⁹ KJV and NIV always translate the name of this offering as “firstfruits.” RSV usually translates it as “firstfruits” but also uses “first” three times, and “first ripe” once. ASV usually uses “first-fruits,” but it uses “first” twice. NASB uses “first fruits” five times, “first” five times, “choice” two times, “choicest” once, and “best” once. GNB translates it in seven different ways and CEV in nine. LITV uses four different translations and MSG five. MKTV uses three translations, though two of them only differ in the addition of a hyphen in “first-fruits.” HCSB loses the consistency record it set in the names of the other offering by using “firstfruits” six times, “first” once, “first sheaf” once, “choice” twice, and “choicest” once.

clear that the prohibition against honey and leaven did not apply to first-fruits.

Later God revealed further information about first-fruits, which can be summarized as follows: (1) Numbers 15:20-21 and 18:12-13 say first-fruits were to apply to the first produce from every crop. (2) Exodus 13:1-12 and Numbers 18:15-16 say first-born males of their animals and their sons were also to be first-fruits. (3) Deuteronomy 18:4 says the first sheering of their sheep each year was to be included among first-fruits. (4) Leviticus 23:10-11 and Numbers 15:17-21 say that the priest was to wave a portion of the worshiper’s first-fruits over the altar as a sign that they had been given to God. (5) In Deuteronomy 18:1-2,4-8, Jehovah assigned first-fruits to the priests, their families, and the whole tribe of Levi to assist with their meals and their support. The priests were from Aaron’s family, which belonged to the tribe of Levi. The priests and all the Levites were chosen to give their whole lives to Jehovah’s service. When the Israelites would arrive in the land, the Levites would not be given a portion of ground to farm or to use in making a living for themselves like the other tribes. They were to receive their support from the people’s gifts. First-fruits were to be some of those gifts. (6) Deuteronomy 26:1-11 describes a recitation an Israelite was to quote when he presented his first-fruits at the altar. The words expressed thanksgiving for all the blessings God had given to Israel and joy at being able to give some of it back to God. The words also recognized that God was the Owner of all the land and that He had entrusted it to His people to use in His service.

This information enables us to understand why first-fruits were not to be offered on the altar and why the prohibition against honey and leaven did not apply to them. They were not to be roasted on the altar because they were to be given to the Levites to help provide for their support. Honey and leaven were not to be excluded from first-fruits because doing so would have meant that the Levites, including the priests, could not use those seasonings in their food. Jehovah intended for their food to be as delicious and palatable as anyone else’s. The Levites’ foods did not have to be bland or flat just because they received their food as gifts from Jehovah’s worshipers.

[2] Salt (2:13)

Verse 13. **And you must season every offering of homage with salt. And you must not omit the salt of the covenant of your God from your homage-offering. You must offer salt with every offering.**

And you must season every offering of homage with salt. After the notation that emphasizes that first-fruits were not fire-offerings, the instructions return to discussing seasoning to be used with homage-offerings. They were to be seasoned with salt. Salt was to be sprinkled over the flour or bread before it was placed on the altar. Salt has the opposite effect on food from honey and leaven. Salt is a preservative and extends the useful life of meats, vegetables, and grain. An ingredient that helps preserve an offering was extremely fitting because the fire-offerings represented firm commitments made to an eternal God.

And you must not omit the salt of the covenant of your God from your homage-offering. This expression stressed that including salt in the offerings was a part of the requirement God made of the Israelites in the covenant that He had made with them. This emphasis heightened their understanding that the covenant God had made with them was no passing fad. The agreement He had made with them was a permanent one. Thus, “covenant of salt” came to be a term that stood for a binding commitment not to be broken (Num. 18:19; 2 Chr. 8:5).

You must offer salt with every offering. Salt was to be included, not only in homage-offerings, but also in all the fire-offerings, for the same reasons.

(f) Of early produce (2:14-16)

Verse 14. **And if you offer an homage-offering of your early produce to Jehovah, you must offer new grain parched in fire, garden-fresh meal as an homage offering of your early produce.**

And if you offer an homage-offering of your early produce to Jehovah. This verse introduces a fifth type of homage-offering. The passage is clearly talking about homage-offerings, because it uses the special name for that type of offering. The word translated “early produce” in this verse is a completely different word from the word that is translated “firstfruits” in verse 12, though most English translations have used the same translation for both words. This word is derived from a root that means “to do early.” It was applied to sons who “did early,” that is, to sons who were born first (Deut. 21:16) and to crops that “did early,” that is, to the first part of a crop to ripen (Ezek. 47:12). The singular noun means “early born,” that is, first born; and it was used to describe first-born sons, daughters, and animals. The same noun in the plural means “early growing,” that is, early ripening produce. We use the same expression when we speak of “early peas” or “new potatoes.” “Early riser” and “early bird” are not far from the same idea.

The dedication of all first born males to God had already been commanded in Exodus 13:1 in commemoration of God’s sparing the first born sons of Israel when He killed the first born males of the Egyptians in the tenth plague. However, first born sons were to be redeemed from life time service to Jehovah’s work by the payment of the redemption price of five silver shekels (see comments on Lev. 27:6 in MESSAGE 38; see also Lev. 18:16).

This verse introduces the idea that first ripening crops also belonged to Jehovah, in recognition that Jehovah gave the Israelite all they had. Early born sons and early produce were examples of the principle that the first and best of an Israelite’s increase in every part of his life belonged to God.

The word translated “early produce” in this verse applied to the earliest gathering from a field. Therefore, a proper translation of the phrase under consideration would be “an homage-offering of early produce.” The phrase does not describe a different kind of offering from those that have already been mentioned. It describes another type of homage-offering. It describes an “homage-

offering of early produce,” as compared to an “homage-offering of fine flour.”

Both first-fruits and homage-offerings of early produce came from the same harvest, but they had distinctly different purposes. As has been shown, first-fruits were the earliest produce from a harvest that was to be given to the priests for their support, while an homage-offering of early produce was to be roasted on the altar as a fire-offering. By offering a portion of his early produce on the altar, the worshiper recognized his harvest came from God and belonged to God. First-fruits were gifts to God’s work and God’s workers. Homage-offerings of early produce were ceremonies of worship.

No reference to homage-offerings of early produce is found in Genesis, so likely this type of homage-offering began at Sinai. Exodus 23:16 says the Feast of Harvest was to be observed with “the first of your labor that you sow in the field,” and Exodus 23:19 says the Israelites were to take the “first of the early produce of your ground into the house of Jehovah your God.” Exodus 34:26 repeats the same instruction. Leviticus 23:17-20 describes offerings to be offered at the Feast of Weeks. The Feast of Weeks is the same Feast that is called Feast of Harvest in Exodus 23:16 and that is called Pentecost in the New Testament. Among the offerings that Leviticus 23:17-20 says were to be offered at that feast were both first-fruits (verses 16-17,20) and an homage-offerings of early produce (verse 18). Instructions concerning homage-offerings of early produce should be carefully distinguished from first-fruits. Failing to do so has produced confusion in trying to understand the instructions of Jehovah about both.¹⁰

¹⁰ English translations have done a great disservice to English readers by translating both the word in verse 12 and the word in verse 14 with the same English word. Since the two verses use entirely different Hebrew words, they should not be translated with the same English word. Because most translations have translated both words as “first-fruits” great confusion has resulted.

KJV usually translates the word “early produce” as “firstfruits,” but it also uses “offering” one time, “first ripe” twice, and “hasty” once. RSV regularly uses the translation “firstfruits,” but it uses “offering” once and “firstripe” twice. ASV usually translates it as “first-fruits,” though it also uses “offering” once, “first ripe” twice, and “first” once. CEV,

you must offer new grain parched in fire, garden-fresh meal, as an homage offering of your early produce. An homage-offering of early produce was to be prepared in a special form. The exact form of that offering is difficult to determine because three rare words are used in its description. Perhaps the best translation of the words in our present state of knowledge is the translation used above. The words mean that the offering was to consist of flour ground from fresh new grain and parched in fire before being offered.

The combined effect of all these instructions is that an Israelite farmer was to save the first produce from his harvest to be taken to The Tabernacle. Before going to The Tabernacle, he was to grind a portion of it into flour and parch it in fire. Upon arriving at the altar, the priest was to mix salt with that portion of his crop and offer it on the altar as an homage-offering of early produce. By this offering, the worshiper recognized that all of his produce and all of his property came from God and belonged to God. The priest was then to wave a portion of the remainder over the altar as a sign that all the produce the worshiper had brought was dedicated to God. The remainder of the offerer’s gifts were called “first-fruits.” They were to be taken by the priest and combined with other gifts for use in feeding and supporting all the Levites.

Verses 15-16. **15 And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it. It [is] an homage-offering.**

16 And the priest shall roast its representative portion, [which shall consist of] some of its ground grain and some of its oil along with all of its frankincense. [It is] a fire-offering made to Jehovah.

GNB, and MSG use an assorted variety of translations. CJB usually uses “firstfruits,” but it adds a hyphen in the word twice, uses “first-gathered” once, “first to be gathered” once, “first ripening” once, “first” once, and omits it once. NASB translates it as “first fruits,” but it uses “early ripened” once, “first ripe” twice, “ripe” once, and omits it once. HCSB usually uses “firstfruits,” but it also uses “first” once, “every” once, and “ripened first” once. None of the versions is completely consistent in its translations.

The procedure and symbolism of this kind of homage-offering was the same as that of the other kinds.

CHAPTER 3

(4) Slaughter-offerings (3:1-17)

(a) Of the herd (3:1-5)

Verse 1. **And if his offering [is] a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings, if he offers [it] from the herd; whether male or female, he must offer an pristine [one] at Jehovah's face.**

And if his offering [is]. The general word for the offerings is used here.

a slaughter-offering of peace offerings. This phrase is the name of a third type of fire-offering. The word translated "slaughter-offering" was used to refer only to the kind of offering described in this chapter. Its related verb was also used only in connection with an offering of this kind of offering (with the possible exception of Exodus 20:24). The idea of the root was "to slaughter," but it was never applied to the slaughtering of an animal that was sold on the market or used at home. It referred to a sacred slaughtering for the purpose of offering this particular kind of offering to God. Perhaps the best possible English rendering of the name is "slaughter-offering."

To the English reader, the word "slaughter" brings visions of brutality or mass murder. It did not hold that connotation for the Israelites. "Slaughtering" brought to their minds the happy times of butchering an animal that had been fattened to provide food for the family. Butchering time was for the Israelites what it still is for many people today--a time of festivity for the whole neighborhood. Friends gathered to help kill the animal, prepare the meat, and share in the first meal prepared from the slaughtered animal. The sacred slaughtering of the "slaughter-offering" had the same connotations. The meat of the offering provided a meal that was shared by Jehovah (Lev. 3:3-5,9-11,14-16), the priests and their families (Lev. 7:30-34; 10:14; 22:10-16), and the worshiper,

his family, and his guests (Lev. 7:15-18; Gen. 31:54; Ex. 18:12). Thus, this offering expressed the joys of fellowship with God and with God's people. It symbolized fellowship among Jehovah, the priests, the worshiper, and his guests. Yet the offering was more than a symbol. It was an example of the peace and fellowship that exists or should exist between and among God and His people.

The full name of this offering was a compound name. It included also the words "of peace-offerings." The name shows that a slaughter-offering included or was composed of several other offerings called "peace-offerings." The second part of the name was always used in the plural, with the exception of Amos 5:22, where it is obviously collective. The name was never "slaughter-offering of a peace-offering." Rather it was always "slaughter-offering of peace-offerings." Jehovah described the various peace-offerings that were included in the slaughter-offering in the MESSAGE 9 (see Introduction to MESSAGE 9).

The word translated "peace-offerings" strengthens the idea of peace and fellowship with God and His people. It was closely related to the Israelites' regular word of greeting, the well know "Shalom" or "Peace." The translation "peace-offerings" is a good one.

The full title for this offering that is used in this verse was not always used in the Scripture. Often the name was shortened to "slaughter-offering." At other times it was shortened to "peace-offerings." The full name and the two shortened forms all three refer to the same type of offering.

This type of offering was known prior to Sinai. Genesis 31:54 says that Jacob offered a slaughter-offering and invited Laban to share in eating it as the two parted from each other. Genesis 46:1 says that Israel (Jacob) offered a slaughter-offering when he learned that Joseph was alive. Exodus 10:25 says that Moses asked Pharaoh for slaughter-offerings as well as rededication-offerings for the Israelites to take with them as they journeyed into the wilderness. Exodus 18:12 says that Jethro brought slaughter-offerings for God to

Sinai and invited Aaron and all the elders of Israel to share in eating them with him. Descriptions of the ceremony of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:1-14,21-28,43-51 reveal that the Passover ceremony was a special form of the slaughter-offering. This fact is supported even more specifically by direct statements in Exodus 12:27; 23:18; 34:25.

Exodus 24:5 says that young men of Israel “slaughtered slaughter-offerings, peace-offerings” at the foot of Mount Sinai. That verse contains the first use of the “peace-offerings” in the Record as a separate name for this type of offering. Since the name “peace-offerings” is introduced in that verse for the first time, it is placed in apposition with the name “slaughter-offering,” which was the name that had been used previously. The appositive relationship of the two names shows that “peace-offerings” was an alternate name for “slaughter-offering,” which was the name for the offering that had been used previously.” Unfortunately, no English translations translate the words in Exodus 24:5 in the manner in which they are written in the Hebrew original. By failing to do so, they miss this important insight into the name and the significance of slaughter-offerings.

Even though neither the name “slaughter-offering” nor the name “peace-offerings” is used in Exodus 24:1,9-10, the description of an offering in those verses shows that Moses and the elders of Israel participated in that type of an offering after God revealed Himself to them in a special vision on the mountain. Similarly, Exodus 29:19-34 does not use either name, but in it Jehovah described an offering that obviously was a slaughter-offering. The verse specifies that an offering of that type was to be used when Aaron and his sons were to be installed into the office of priest. In Exodus 34:15, Jehovah warned the Israelites against offering slaughter-offerings to other gods and against eating the meat of a slaughter-offering that had been offered to another god.

The only distinction that can be detected between slaughter-offerings described in this chapter and slaughter-offerings offered prior to the dedication of The Tabernacle are the two items for which references are cited in the Introduction to this

MESSAGE. Briefly, those distinctions are: (1) In the future, slaughter-offerings, like the other fire-offerings, were to be conducted at The Tabernacle. (2) They were to be presided over by the priests instead of by each family’s patriarch. Everything else that is said about slaughter-offerings in this chapter is fully consistent with references to slaughter-offerings in prior Scriptures, with the exception of the special provisions that were made for the Passover slaughter-offering.¹¹

¹¹ KJV is consistent in its translations of the titles of this offering, using “sacrifice of peace offerings,” “sacrifice,” and “peace offerings” for the three titles of this offering. It is odd, however, that KJV is careful to use the plural “peace offerings” everywhere (even in Amos 5:22) except in this one chapter. The only problem with the KJV names for this offering is that, instead of using a distinctive name for the first shortened form of the name it uses the word “sacrifice,” which is too general a term for the specific name that is used in the original language. Also, the translation “sacrifice” sounds like the offerer was suffering and denying himself when actually he was bringing a glad gift to Jehovah. ASV always translates the names as “sacrifice of peace-offerings,” “sacrifice,” and “peace-offerings.” RSV usually translates the full title “sacrifice of peace offerings,” though in Leviticus 3:1,3,6,9; and in Numbers 6:18 it shortens the full title to “peace offering” (singular). It translates the shortened forms as “sacrifice” and “peace offerings,” rendering the latter in the singular once (Num. 6:14). SGV uses a variety of translations for the full title, but most frequently uses “thanksgiving sacrifice.” For the shortened titles, it always uses “sacrifice” and “thank-offerings” (however, using the singular in Lev. 7:14; Num. 6:14; 15:8). NEB usually uses “shared-offering” for the full title. It uses six different translations for the first shortened form but most often uses “sacrifice.” It uses “shared-offering” for the second shortened form., but lapses into the singular in Leviticus. 7:14,33; Numbers 6:14; 15:8; and Ezekiel 45:15,17. NASB always translates with “sacrifice of peace offerings,” “sacrifice,” and “peace offerings,” with the exception of three instances in which the longer title is shortened to “peace offerings.” It lapses into the singular “peace offering” in Numbers 6:14 and in 2 Samuel 6:18. It alone uses the singular in Amos 5:22. DRV uses a confusing variety of translations but generally translates the full title as “victim of peace offerings” or “sacrifice of peace offerings.” It usually translates the first shortened form as “sacrifice” or “victim” and the second shortened form as “peace offerings” or “victims of peace offerings.” It falls into the singular only in Leviticus. 7:14 and Numbers 6:14, where it translates the name as “victim.” JB usually uses “communion sacrifice” for the full title and “sacrifice” for the first shortened form. It always uses “communion sacrifices” for the second shortened form, except that it renders it in the singular in Leviticus 7:14,33; 9:22; Numbers 6:14; 15:8; 29:39; and Ezekiel 45:15; 46:2,12 (twice). NAB, LB and ABV render the full title as “peace offering” and the two

if he offers [it] from the herd. As with the other offerings, several types of slaughter-offerings were authorized. The first was a slaughter-offering of the herd, that is, of a cow or bull. Neither this expression nor descriptions of this offering used in later instructions specify an animal of any certain age (see comments on Lev. 4:10 under the heading the head of cattle of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings). The principle involved in allowing the worshiper to choose either a young animal or an older one is the same as in the case of a rededication-offering (see comments on Lev. 1:5 above under the heading And he shall kill the bull).

whether male or female, he must offer a pristine [one] without blemish. Whereas a rededication-offering could consist only of a male animal, a slaughter-offering could be either male or female. Since the main emphasis of this offering was not the dedication of self but the dedication of possessions, it was not so necessary for the most valuable specimen possible to be offered. Thus, it was allowable to offer a female as well as a male (see comments on Lev. 1:3 above under the heading a pristine male). Perhaps, this provision also

shortened forms as “sacrifice” and “peace offering.” MV most often renders the names as “recompense-offering,” “sacrifice,” and “recompense-offering.” NWT always renders them as “communion sacrifice,” “sacrifice,” and “communion

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sacrifice.” NAB, LB, ABV, MV, and NWT use the plural when more than one animal was offered and thus completely miss the significance of the plural in the Hebrew. NIV usually shortens the full name into “fellowship offering,” but it also translates it as “sacrifice of the fellowship offering” and “sacrificed as a fellowship offering.” It consistently translates the first shortened form as “sacrifice,” except for using “other sacrifices” twice and changing the name into the verb “sacrifice” twice. It consistently translates the second shortened form as “fellowship offerings.” HCSB translates the full title as “fellowship sacrifice” or “sacrifice of fellowship.” It usually translates the first shortened form as “sacrifice,” but it uses “offering” once, “feasting” once, “sacrificial feast” twice, “feast” once, “sacrificial gifts” once, and one time changes “offer a slaughter-offering” into the verb “sacrifice.” It consistently translates the second shortened form as “fellowship offerings,” but it changes the plural to singular when only one animal was offered.”

revealed that women as well as men could enjoy fellowship with God and His people.

The animal to be offered was to be a pristine specimen, whole and healthy, as in the case of the rededication-offering (see comments on Lev. 1:3 above under the heading a pristine male). Only an animal in top condition was worthy of being used as an offering to Jehovah.

at Jehovah’s face. Like the other offerings, peace-offerings in the future were to be offered at The Tabernacle, in front of Jehovah. The Israelites had had a long tradition of offering peace-offerings wherever the patriarch of the family deemed appropriate. That practice was to be discontinued so that slaughter-offerings of peace-offering could be kept pure as Jehovah had designed them (see comments on Lev. 1:3 above under the heading the Tent of Meeting).

Verse 2. **And he shall press his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it [at] the entrance of The Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall splash the blood on the altar round about.**

The features mentioned in this verse are identical to features of the rededication-offering, with the same significance (see comments on Lev. 1:4-5 above). However, in connection with the slaughter-offering, these symbols hold the added significance that fellowship with Jehovah and His people was made possible by the offerer’s total surrender to God.

Verse 3. **And he shall offer from the slaughter-offering of the peace offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah, the fat that covers the intestines, and all the fat that [is] on the intestines,**

And he shall offer from the slaughter-offering of peace-offering, a fire-offering to Jehovah. Parts of the animal were to be given as a fire-offering to Jehovah. Those parts of the offering were Jehovah’s share of the fellowship feast.

the fat that covers the intestines, and all the fat that [is] on the intestines. These words begin a description of the part of the animal that belonged

to Jehovah. The word translated “intestines” sometimes seems to have referred to all entrails, as in Leviticus 1:9,13,16. At other times, it seems to refer specifically to the intestines. In this verse, it seems to refer to the intestines, because the next verse shows that it did not include the kidneys and liver and because fat does not cover all of an animal’s entrails. The fat that was over and between the intestines was considered by ancient peoples to be a special delicacy. It is an exceedingly rich food, of which a person can eat only a little, and thus it became a symbol of richness and honor (Gen. 45:18; Num. 8:12; Deut. 32:14). This best portion of the animal was to be given to Jehovah. As strange as it sounds to Americans, this view of animal fat continues in some parts of the world today. In Russia the fat is the most desirable portion of a cow or a pig for food, and it brings the highest prices in their markets. As men and God feasted together, the best part belonged to God.

Verse 4. **And the two kidneys along with the fat that [is] beside them on the flanks. Also he must lay aside the attachment between the liver and the kidneys.**

Other parts of the animal that belonged to Jehovah were the kidneys, the fat on and around them, and a fatty attachment that lies between the liver and the kidneys. The parts listed in this verse likewise were considered to be extreme delicacies by ancient peoples.

Verse 5. **And Aaron’s sons shall roast it on the altar of the rededication-offering, which [is] on the wood over the fire. [It is] a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.**

The parts belonging to Jehovah were to be roasted on the altar. By that means, Jehovah consumed His portion of the fellowship feast. Jehovah’s parts that were to be roasted on the altar were a fire-offering that gave just as sweet a fragrance to Jehovah as did the rededication-offering and the representative portion of the homage-offering (see comments on Lev. 1:9 under the heading a soothing fragrance to Jehovah and on Lev. 2:2 under the heading [It is] a fire-offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah).

(b) Of the flock (3:6-17)

[1] Of any animal of the flock
(3:6) (3:6)

Verse 6. **And if his offering for a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings to Jehovah [is] from the flock, male or female, he must offer a pristine [one].**

Next, Jehovah described a second type of slaughter-offering, the offering of an animal from the flock. The flock means a sheep or a goat. Like the first type of slaughter-offering, the animal could be male or female; but it had to be a pristine specimen (see comments on Lev. 1:3 above under the heading a pristine male).

[2] Of a sheep (3:7-11)

Verses 7. **If he offers a sheep for his offering, then shall he offer it at Jehovah’s face.**

If he offers a lamb for his offering. In the remainder of the instructions for an offering from the flock, Jehovah described the offering of a sheep and of a goat separately. The reason was a difference in the physical characteristics of the two animals. The word translated “sheep” in this verse is the same as that translated “sheep” in Leviticus 1:10. It seems to refer to a sheep of any age. In other instructions, a full-grown sheep was specified for certain public occasions (Ex. 29:1,3,19,20,22,26, 27,31,32; Lev. 8:2,22,29; 9:4,18,19; Num. 6:14,17,19), while a young yearling lamb was specified for other public occasions (Ex. 12:3-5; Lev. 23:19). Evidently in offerings offered by individual worshipers, the offerer was free to choose an animal of any age, according to what he could afford (see comments on Lev. 1:5 under the heading And he shall kill the bull).

then shall he offer it at Jehovah’s face. “At Jehovah’s face” means in front of The Tabernacle,

which Jehovah had designated as a place to meet with Him. Jehovah repeatedly emphasized that the offerings were to be offered at The Tabernacle, because that instruction was new. He wanted them to be sure to understand it and obey it (see comments on Lev. 1:3 under the heading The Tent of Meeting).

Verse 8. **And he shall press his hand on the head of his offering, and he shall kill it before The Tent of the Meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall splash its blood on the altar round about.**

The instructions concerning killing the animal and splashing the blood on the sides of the altar are identical to those for the rededication-offering and for a peace-offering of the herd. They were spoken in almost identical words and have the same meaning (see comments on Lev. 1:4-5 above). The meaning and significance was the same in both cases.

Verse 9. **And he shall offer of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah: its fat, [including] its entire fatty hump up to the bone. And he must set aside the fat that covers the intestines and all the fat that [is] on the intestines.**

And he shall offer of the slaughter-offering of peace-offerings a fire-offering to Jehovah. Part of the offering was to be offered on the altar as a fire-offering (see comments on Lev. 3:3-5 above).

[including] its entire fatty hump up to the bone. This phrase refers to a physical characteristic of the sheep of Israel that is lacking in goats and that also lacking in sheep that are known in America. The sheep of Israel even today have a large fatty mass right at the tail. It is so large that it is obvious to the sight of anyone looking at one of the sheep. Those fatty masses have been known to weigh as much as fourteen pounds. They are not a part of the tail of the sheep but right under the tale. This entire fatty mass was to be set aside for Jehovah, right down to the bone on which it rested. These balls of fat were considered by ancient peoples to be a great delicacy. Thus, that part of the sheep belonged to Jehovah, along with other fatty

parts of the animal, as His part of the fellowship meal.

And he must set aside the fat that covers the intestines and all the fat that [is] on the intestines. These fatty parts of the animal are the same as those described in Leviticus 3:3 for an animal from the herd.

Verse 10. **And the two kidneys along with the fat that [is] beside them on the flanks. Also he must lay aside the attachment between the liver and the kidneys.**

These fatty parts of the sheep are identical to those of a bull or cow (see comments on Lev. 3:4 above).

Verse 11. **And the priest shall roast it on the altar [like] food. [It is] a fire-offering to Jehovah.**

This statement makes it even more specific that the fatty parts symbolized Jehovah's participation in the fellowship meal. For that reason, in later MESSAGES it was called "food of God" (Lev. 21:6,8,17,21,22; 22:25). The idea that God shared in a fellowship meal with the worshiper, his guests, and the priests was a tremendously different idea from the pagan concept of offering a food offering to their god because the god would go hungry if his worshipers did not feed him. (See Critical Note at the end of the Introduction to this MESSAGE.)

[3] Of a goat (3:12-16)

Verses 12-16. **12 And if his offering [is] a goat, then he shall offer it at Jehovah's face.**

13 And he shall press his hand on its head, and he shall kill it at the face of The Tent of Meeting. Then the sons of Aaron shall splash its blood on the altar round about.

14 And he shall offer from it his offering, [as] a fire-offering to Jehovah: the fat that covers the intestines, and all the fat that [is] on the intestines,

15 And the two kidneys along with the fat that [is] beside them on the flanks. And he shall

lay aside the attachment between the liver and the kidneys.

16 And the priest shall roast them on the altar [like] food. All fat [is] a fire offering, a soothing fragrance to Jehovah.

These verses describe the slaughter-offering of a goat. With the exception of the handling of the fatty mass under the tail, which a goat did not have, the offering of a goat followed the same form as the offering of a sheep, with the same symbolic significance. Like the word for “sheep” in Leviticus 3:7, the word that is used here for “goat” referred to an animal of any age (see comments on Lev. 3:7 above under the heading If he offers a lamb for his offering). The procedure to be followed and the meaning of the offering was the same regardless of the animal used.

No provision was made for a slaughter-offering of birds, no doubt because a bird did not provide sufficient meat for a fellowship meal.

(c) Eating fat and blood forbidden
(3:17)

Verse 17. [Here is] a statute for an age through your generations in all your dwelling places. You must not eat any fat or any blood.

[Here is] a statute. Jehovah closed this MESSAGE with an instruction that He called “a statute.” The word translated “statute” is one of several Hebrew words for “commandment.” It is based on a root that means “to cut” or “to inscribe.” It is probably best translated into English as “prescription.” This word occurs here for the first time in Leviticus, but it is not its first occurrence in the books of the Law. The word has both a masculine form and a feminine form, with no discernable difference in meaning between the two forms. Taking both forms together, it occurs once in Genesis, fourteen times in Exodus, and thirty-five times in Leviticus.¹² It is a highly important word

¹² In Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, KJV translates this word as “statute” forty-two times and as “ordinance” eight times. ASV uses the translations “statute,” “ordinance,” “due,” “law,” and “portion.” RSV and NASB usually translate it as “statute,” but also use the translations “ordinance,” “due,” and “portion.” NIV uses “decree,” “ordinance,” “regulation,”

and needs to be heeded with extreme care. Though in this verse, the word applies specifically to this one commandment, it is used so often in the book of Leviticus that it becomes obvious that the idea in the word applies to the whole of Jehovah’s instructions about Israel’s worship.

The significance of this word is that Jehovah was writing a prescription for Israel’s way of life. Jehovah was establishing the rules for Israel’s practices in worship and daily living in order to protect those practices from corruption. Israel’s worship could be corrupted by copying pagan falsehoods or by using their own human misunderstanding and reasoning. God sought to protect Israel worship from both dangers. Therefore, He not only gave them specific instructions but also established those instructions as commands. They were not optional or negotiable. The Israelites were to observe them, not revise them. Jehovah alone could change them when He knew the right time had come, which He did in Christ.

for an age. The expression translated in this manner is one word in Hebrew. It has usually been translated as “perpetual,” which has often been understood to mean “eternal.” However, the word

“share,” and “practice.” HCSB usually uses “statute,” but also uses “ordinance,” “rule,” “portion,” “command,” “custom,” and “belong.” The freer translations are even more inconsistent. GNB uses “statute,” “law,” “command,” “rule,” “regulation,” “share,” and in five verses omits it altogether. MSG uses “rule,” “ordinance,” “decree,”

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“instruction,” “practice,” “share,” “always get,” “has taken,” “to be observed,” “live like,” “I tell you,” “guideline,” and omits it once. The translations should have given greater effort to translating distinctive Hebrew words more consistently.

A great deal of study and work needs to be invested in arriving at translations of distinctive Hebrew names for the offers in ways that will enable English readers to gain an accurate understanding of the true meanings of the original words. Those of us who believe God revealed every word precisely and without error should make every effort to translate His words as precisely as Jehovah used them in revealing His truths. Hopefully, in God’s providence the comments in this writing may live long enough and spread widely enough to be helpful to that end.

does not necessarily mean absolutely without ever an end. It means strictly “an age” or “on and on.” It was used with reference to the past to mean “ancient times.” It described a long indefinite extension of time into the past, but that time did not necessarily extend into eternity past (Gen. 6:4; 49:26; Deut. 32:7; 33:15; Josh. 24:2; Job 22:15; Ps. 25:6; 77:5; 93:2; 119:52; 143:3; Prov. 8:23; 22:28; 23:10; Eccl. 1:10; Is. 44:7; 46:9; 51:9; 57:11; 58:12; 61:4; 63:9,11; 64:4; Jer. 2:20; 5:15; 6:6,16; 18:15; 28:8; Lam. 3:6; Ezek. 25:15; 26:20; 36:2; Joel 2:2; Amos 9:11; Micah. 5:2; 7:14; Mal. 3:4). The word was also used with a similar meaning with reference to the future (see for example Deut. 15:17). In that case, it meant a long, indefinite extension of time into the future, but it did not necessarily extend into eternity in the future. The word describes an action that is to be permanent, but not necessarily eternal. Sometimes the action might last forever, but the word itself does not require that meaning.

This understanding of the Hebrew word is supported by the fact that the Hebrew language had other expressions that did mean “everlasting” or “forever.” For that idea, the Hebrews used the expressions like “to the ultimate” (2 Sam. 2:26), “continuousness” (Is. 57:15), and “all the days” (Deut. 28:29). Interestingly, sometimes the Scriptures used the words “age” or “ages” along with an expression that did mean “eternal.” An example is Exodus 15:18, which says, “Jehovah will reign for an age and a continuousness” or “on and on and forever.”

The Hebrew expression “for an age” has almost universally been translated “forever and ever” in English translations. Doing so fails to recognize the distinctive difference between it and expressions that mean “eternal.” Failing to recognize the difference has led to serious confusion in interpretations. If we pay attention to the difference in the meaning of the two terms, we will conclude that Jehovah chose His words carefully. In this verse, the choice is crucial. He used a word that meant “permanent,” but He did not use an expression that means strictly “forever.” In so doing, He left open the possibility that at some point He could discontinue the obligation without contradicting this command. Jehovah actually did discontinue this requirement through Jesus Christ.

Without recognizing the distinction, the New Testament teaching that observance of the Law ended with Jesus seems to be a serious contradiction to this and other similar Old Testament verses.

This Hebrew word is used here for the first time in Leviticus. However, it occurs ten times in Genesis and four times in Exodus. KJV translates this word in three ways in the Genesis and Exodus passages: “everlasting,” “for ever,” and “perpetual.” English readers would be helped greatly if this significant word were translated more strictly and consistently in KJV and other English translations. In the Genesis and Exodus passages, it is used to refer to “lives” once, “generations” once, “a covenant” five times, “Canaan as a possession” twice, “Jehovah as a God” once, “hills” once, “rule” once, “a statute” once, and “a priesthood” once.

In Leviticus and Numbers, the word occurs seven times with reference to Israel’s way of life. In those books, it is used to refer to “statutes,” “a covenant,” and “a priesthood.” A study of all the times this word is applied to the observances God gave at Sinai leads to the assured conclusion that, when Jehovah said that an instruction was “for an age” or “for ages,” He did not necessarily mean it was binding forever. The meaning was that the instructions had long lasting value, but the day might come when God would cancel them for a better way. The whole system could outlive its day of usefulness and be replaced. Jehovah left the way open for Him to replace Israel’s ritualistic way of worshiping and living with the freer and less complicated way of living that Jesus brought into the world.¹³

Since the term “[for] an age” does not specify a definite time span or term limit, only God’s future commands could determine when the requirement might end. Until then, Israelites were to faithfully obey the command. They had no right to discontinue it on their own. Leaving the way open for Jehovah to discontinue the rituals He gave to Israel did not mean that the Israelite had the right to change the system or its regulations themselves.

¹³ KJV most often translates this word as “ever,” but it also uses twenty-eight other expressions to translate it. Other versions are equally inconsistent.

The commands God gave them were permanent until He gave further instructions. The practices were to continue indefinitely into the future until Jehovah Himself changed them.

through your generations. This statute was not only for the generation then living. It was to be continued in future generations. The expression, however, did not mean in every future generation forever. It was to continue into future generations of the Israelites, unless and until Jehovah gave further instructions. These words indicate that these instructions were not required of other nations who might accept Jehovah. They were special requirements for God's special people Israel.

in all your dwelling places. This statute was also to be practiced wherever the Israelites lived. As they would scatter over the land that God had promised them, they were to obey this command wherever they might live in the land. However, it did not apply only to the Promised Land. They were to practice this command wherever else they might live in the whole world. Wherever they went, they were to be known as a people who honored God above themselves and honored God too much to ever disobey His clear commands anywhere they might be. Jehovah's authority was not confined to one nation or land, and Israel's obligation to obey Him was also not confined to any one place on earth.

The statute stresses "your" generations and "your" dwelling places. It was a command given to Israel to set them apart from other nations as a nation that worshiped Jehovah God.

You must not eat any fat or any blood. The specific command that God gave the Israelites in this verse was that they to refrain from eating fat or blood. In observing slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings, God required that the blood be splashed around the sides of the altar as a sign of the commitment of the worshiper's life and possessions to God and as a sign that the promised Son will eventually come to give His life to provide payment for people's sins. Jehovah also required that the fat

was to be offered to Him on the altar, because it was the richest and best part of the animal. The commandment in this verse goes further and instructs the Israelites not ever to eat blood or fat at any time. The reason must have been the same. Those parts of all of Israel's animals belonged only to God.

Some have tried to explain this statute as a matter of health. The real reason was far more significant. The reason was that blood and fat belonged to God, and the Israelites were to recognize that fact by refusing to eat either at any time. In a very real way, life is in the blood, and no person or animal can live without life flowing through his body. Refusing to eat blood is a way of recognizing that life belongs to God. The Israelite recognized that he as a man was not the giver of life, and he had no right to take it away. Instead, he should surrender his own life to God. Because Jehovah was Lord and protector of Israel, the best of everything always belonged to Him. Refusing to eat fat was a way of recognizing God's ownership of everything.

When God gave this statute at the close of His instructions about slaughter-offerings of peace-offerings, He showed that for the Israelites every meal was to be a kind of private slaughter-offering. Therefore, this practice was to be a symbol that Jehovah shared fellowship with them at all of their meals. It meant that Israelites were to enjoy fellowship with God every time they sat down to eat.

The fact that the fat, as well as the blood, was not to be eaten lends strength to the view that the blood was not intended primarily to represent the blood of Jesus. If symbolizing Jesus' death had been the reason for this prohibition, only the eating of blood would have been forbidden.

A later MESSAGE, recorded in Leviticus 7:22-27, gives more details concerning this prohibition (see comments on Lev. 7:22-27 in MESSAGE 8).

Application

The offerings of Israel beautifully symbolized experiences with God that are as meaningful for modern Christians as they were for ancient Israelites. The reason these offerings were abolished in Christ was not that the truths in them are no longer valid but that those truths are now so much more clearly revealed that their symbols are no longer needed. With the fuller light that has come through Christ, Christians can concentrate on the reality of these experiences, rather than on their symbols. Yet, a Christian can study the symbolic offerings of Israel with great profit.

The offerings of Israel can help Christians understand that the spiritual truths taught in the New Testament are the same truths God taught from the beginning of the world. They are simply taught more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Whether those truths are taught through the symbols of the Law or through the revelations of Jesus and the apostles, they are always the same. That insight should strengthen our commitment to hold firmly to those truths today and teach them faithfully. It should also encourage us to live those teachings every day.

The rededication-offering can help us commit our whole lives to God. It can assure us that our lives will go better when we let God have His way completely.

The homage-offering can inspire us to practice the principles of stewardship. It can confirm to us that a part of trusting our lives to God is trusting our possessions to Him as well. It can assure us that we get more out of the possessions God gives us when we surrender them back to Him. It can help us learn to use our possession gladly only in ways that please Him and that further His kingdom.

The slaughter-offering can inspire us to earnestly seek to enjoy Christian fellowship—with God, with our ministers, and with our fellow Christians. It can confirm to us that all three aspects of fellowship depend on each other. It can motivate us to strengthen our fellowship with God's appointed ministers and with our fellow believers in order to strengthen our fellowship with Him.

Great spiritual profit for Christian can result from a discerning study of each of the ancient offerings that Jehovah revealed to Israel at Sinai. Study them with discernment and prayer, and the benefits to you will be more than worth the effort it will require.